

164
PAGES
OF ALL-NEW
ROBO FEATURES

ALL THE NEW MOVIE STARS INTERVIEWED

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

ROBOCOP

MASSIVE 52-PAGE MOVIE PREVIEW

REBUILDING ROBOCOP

EXCLUSIVE ACCESS!
CAST • DIRECTOR • WRITER

**TOP 25 SCI-FI
CYBORGS**
From The Bionic Man to Star Wars

**YOUR DEFINITIVE
GUIDE TO THE
ROBOCOP WORLD**
PAST • PRESENT • FUTURE!

FEATURING:



► The Original Trilogy



► The TV Shows



► The Comics & Games

**ORIGINAL ROBOCOP DIRECTOR PAUL VERHOEVEN • CREATING ED-209
ROBOT COPS • THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT • AND LOADS MORE...**



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WELCOME MODE...

A full-page background image of RoboCop in his iconic black and silver armor, sitting on a futuristic motorcycle. The motorcycle's headlights are on, casting a bright glow. RoboCop's helmet has a red visor, and there are red light accents on the armor. The overall tone is dark and high-tech.

ROBOCOP HAS BEEN UPGRADED

The new *RoboCop* movie hits UK cinemas on 7 February, and it promises to be more, so much more than just another remake.

To celebrate, we not only have a mammoth section celebrating the new movie, but a whole bunch of all-new features exploring the history of *RoboCop* – on the big screen, on the small screen, in comics and beyond.

Boasting 14 exclusive interviews with *RoboCop* stars and creators past and present, this truly is *The COMPLETE Guide To RoboCop*.

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
ROBOCOP
FROM THE MAKERS OF *SFX* MAGAZINE

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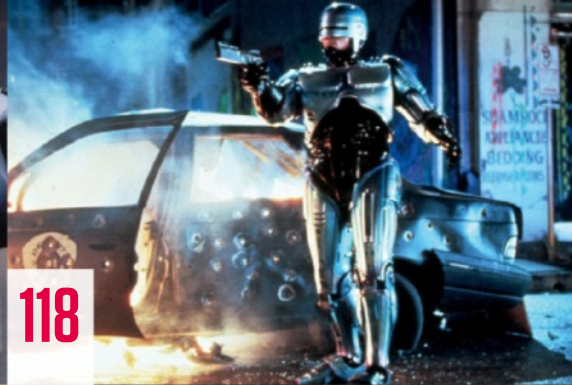
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SPECIAL **SFX** EDITION
★ PRESENTS ★

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO ROBOCOP

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"I'd buy that for sixteen dollars and thirty-four pence"



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ROBOHISTORY

PINBALL IMAGES: PLANET 9 PINS

RoboCop is nothing short of a cultural icon – an incredible accomplishment for a walking tin can. Whether it's films, comics, TV shows or videogames Alex Murphy's sharp-shooting alter-ego has been a near-constant pop cultural presence, and with good reason. He's a triumph of design, a blisteringly smart and increasingly prescient satire of "the future of law enforcement", not to mention a straight up, bonafide badass. He's been spoofed/honoured dozens of different times, and though we'd be the first to admit he misses the mark as often as he hits, few characters have demonstrated the enduring

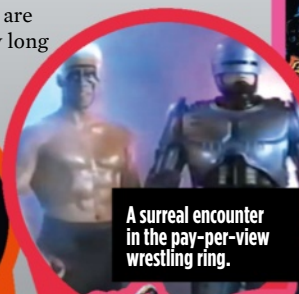
allure of OCP Crime Prevention Unit 001. Across the next four pages you'll find a timeline of RoboCop's most significant (and some not so significant) appearances in a variety of mediums over the last 25 years. Not started reading yet? Well, what are you waiting for? You know how long you've got to comply....

Brought to book: the second film gets a comics adaptation...



...It also got a new game on consoles and in arcades.

Now you can control him! The RoboCop arcade game.



A surreal encounter in the pay-per-view wrestling ring.

The film was R-rated, but the cartoon was aimed at kids.



He is the law! Murphy dies and RoboCop is born. Hoorah!

The first of many ventures into the world of comics.

An ongoing comic told brand new stories set in future Detroit.

RoboCop 2 from RoboCop 2. Like the film, a bit of a mess.

The future of law meets the past of arcade gaming.



1987 >

1988 >

1990 >

17 JULY ROBOCOP (film) The movie that started it all didn't come out in the UK until 5 February 1988, but debuted in the US almost half a year earlier. A legend was born.

28 JULY ROBOCOP (comic) This one-shot comic written by Bob Harris follows the plot of the movie, and was originally published in black and white, before a colour reprint in August 1990.

1 OCTOBER-17 DECEMBER ROBOCOP: THE ANIMATED SERIES Only 12 episodes of this Marvel Productions' RoboCop series were ever made, it's loosely based on the events of the film, but in a more futuristic setting.

UNKNOWN ROBOCOP (arcade game) The first side-scrolling RoboCop shooter (based on the events of the first film) appeared in arcades in 1988, before making its way to a variety of home consoles the year after.

16 JANUARY-19 NOVEMBER 1991 ROBOCOP (comic) This Marvel series ran for 23 issues and was set in a slightly more futuristic Detroit. Fan feedback eventually saw Marvel strip the more fantastical elements out.

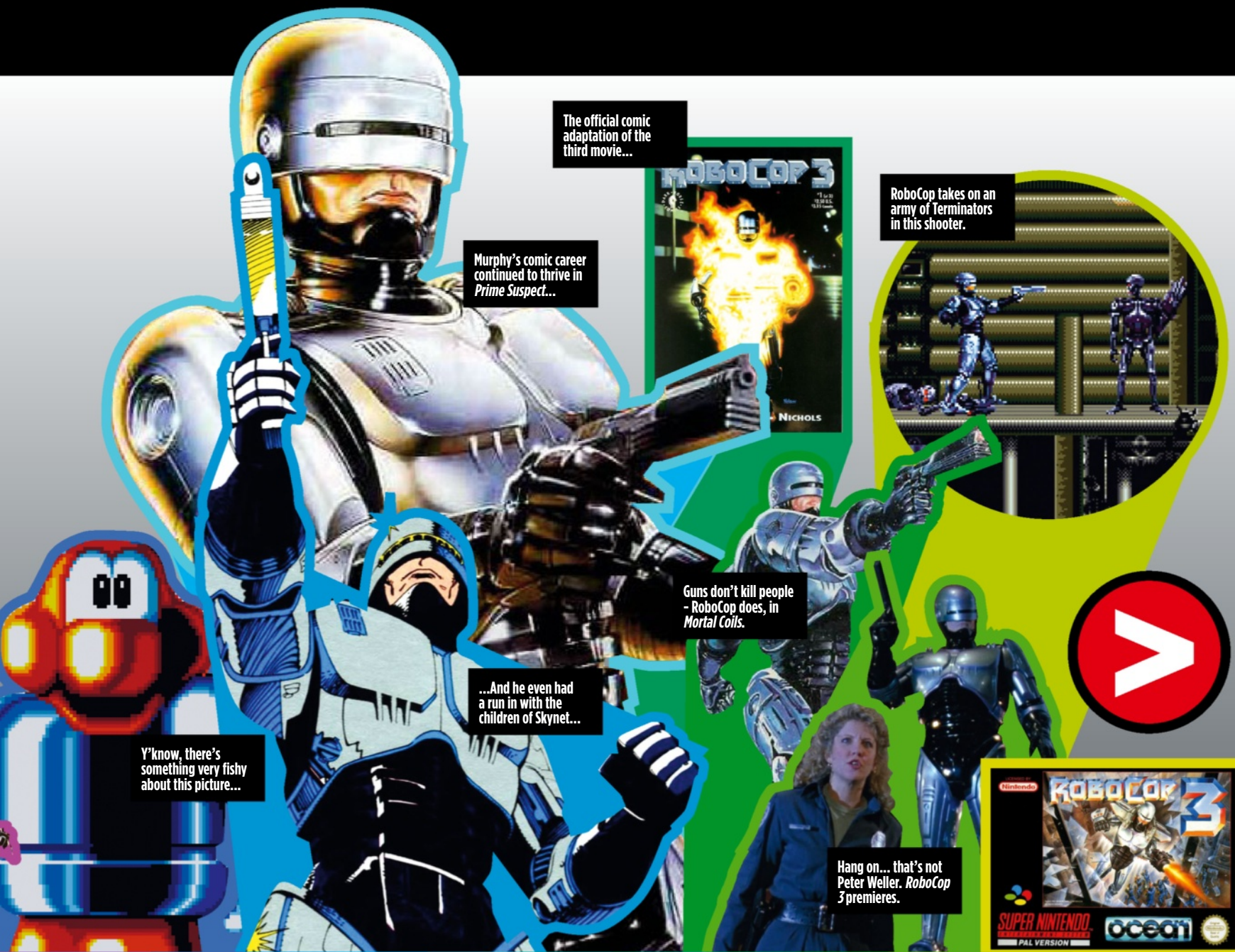
19 MAY CAPITAL COMBAT: THE RETURN OF ROBOCOP (event) The first of RoboCop's forays outside of his own fiction was this dubious, one-off wrestling pay-per-view event which saw Murphy rescue WCW wrestler Sting from The Four Horsemen. We swear we're not making this up.

22 JUNE ROBOCOP 2 (film) Irvin Kershner's RoboCop sequel debuted on this day. The UK had to wait until 12 October.

26 JUNE ROBOCOP 2 (comic) A three-issue mini-series based on the events of the second film and printed in colour.

DATE UNKNOWN ROBOCOP 2 (console game) The quality of the visuals, levels and controls varied depending on the platform you were playing on, but all versions were side-scrolling shooters. The game was later released in arcades.

DATE UNKNOWN ROBOCOP PINBALL GAME Featuring classic movie quotes in "Digital Stereo". Impossible to resist another go on.



1991 >

1992 > 1993 >

31 OCTOBER THE SIMPSONS "TREEHOUSE OF HORROR II" (TV) - You know you've made the big leagues when you're spoofed on *The Simpsons*. In the third segment Homer is killed and brought back to life as a robot. The "boot-up" sequence is instantly recognisable.

DATE UNKNOWN JAMES POND 2: CODENAME ROBOCOP (videogame) Sequel to the fishy platformer. The title screen features a jaunty rendition of the *RoboCop* theme.

1 MAY-AUGUST ROBOCOP VERSUS THE TERMINATOR (comic) Frank Miller's hugely popular, four-issue comic book crossover saw RoboCop fight Skynet in the future. The first *RoboCop* comic to be published by Dark Horse.

DATE UNKNOWN DARK HORSE PRESENTS ISSUES 1-3 (comic) A three-part strip in Dark Horse's anthology title, leading up to the events of *RoboCop: Prime Suspect*.

20 OCTOBER-19 JANUARY ROBOCOP: PRIME SUSPECT (comic) Murphy is framed for murder in this four issue mini-series.

DATE UNKNOWN ROBOCOP: INVASIONS (comic) A prequel story to *RoboCop: Mortal Coils* that ran over four issues of anthology title, *Dark Horse Presents*.

16 JANUARY CITY HUNTER (film) RoboCop's iconic pistol, the Auto 9, pops up in the Jackie Chan action comedy *City Hunter*.

20 JULY-2 NOVEMBER ROBOCOP 3 (comic) A three-issue mini-series adapting the movie of the same name.

21 SEPTEMBER-21 DECEMBER ROBOCOP: MORTAL COILS (comic) A four-issue mini-series which sees RoboCop tracking a perp in snowy Denver.

5 NOVEMBER ROBOCOP 3 (film) The third *RoboCop* film sat on the shelf for over a year after Orion went bankrupt. It wasn't released in the UK until 24 June 1994.

DATE UNKNOWN ROBOCOP VERSUS THE TERMINATOR (videogame) Loosely based on the comic, another side-scrolling shooter. This was released on 16-bit consoles and made the most of the extra power.

DATE UNKNOWN ROBOCOP 3 (videogame) The third *RoboCop* game was another side-scrolling shooter but featured numerous upgrades. The PC version, *RoboCop 3D*, had four 3D sections.

Bump! Shake! Wiggle!
Interactive action in
RoboCop: The Ride.

Hang on, is this
on PS2 or C64? An
underwhelming FPS.

The Killing Machine
one-shot pits Murphy
against a hacker.

Sin City was created
by ex-*RoboCop 2*
scripter Frank Miller.

"There will be...
trouble." Miller's
tough-looking Robo.

RoboCop gambles
with his life in the
Roulette mini-series.

Lewis's rambunctious
sister causes trouble
for Murphy...

RoboRomp. The TV
show had a kid-
friendly appeal.

Prime Directives
marked RoboCop's
last stand on TV.

1994 >

1995 >

1998 >

2001 >

2003 >

2004 >

2005 >

11 JANUARY-APRIL 1994 ROBOCOP: ROULETTE (comic) RoboCop tracks an ED-209 gone berserk and, er, an IRS agent in the mini-series.

18 MARCH-26 NOVEMBER ROBOCOP: THE SERIES (TV) Richard Eden and his chin took over the role of RoboCop in this 22-episode Canadian series. The pilot episode was based on a script by RoboCop writers Ed Neumeier and Michael Miner.

WINTER ROBOCOP: THE RIDE A ride where the action on screen was synchronised with hydraulic seats. In the four minute ride you and RoboCop would team up to save the mayor from Cyberpunk ROM.

7 SEPTEMBER-3 FEBRUARY ROBOCOP: ALPHA COMMANDO (cartoon) The second RoboCop animated series had little in common with the films or TV shows. It's set in 2030 and sees RoboCop reactivated after five years offline to assist Alpha Division.

4-25 JANUARY ROBOCOP: PRIME DIRECTIVES (TV) Four feature length episodes make up this mini-series which takes RoboCop back to its adult, satirical roots: "Dark Justice", "Meltedown", "Resurrection" and "Crash And Burn". Shame it was all so cheap.

9 MARCH SPACED Simon Pegg sitcom *Spaced* features a brilliant RoboCop skit in the *Robot Wars*-themed episode, "Mettle".

16 MAY ROBOCOP (videogame) This PlayStation 2 and GameCube first person shooter didn't even look good at the time, and played worse.

JULY 2003-JANUARY 2006 ROBOCOP (comic) Publishers Avatar Press acquired the rights to RoboCop and produced a nine-issue series based on Frank Miller's abandoned *RoboCop 2* film script.

AUGUST ROBOCOP: KILLING MACHINE (comic) A young hacker releases a robotic killing machine from OCP's vaults in this one-shot.

9 AUGUST DRACULA 3000 (film) RoboCop's Auto 9 gun appears on a gun rack briefly in this straight to DVD shocker.

JANUARY ROBOCOP: WILD CHILD (comic) Officer Lewis must save her robo-partner from her criminal sister, Heaven, in this one-shot story.

1 APRIL SIN CITY (film) One of Hartigan's guns closely resembles RoboCop's Auto 9. The film was, of course, directed by Frank Miller (and Robert Rodriguez).



2008 > 2010 > 2011 > 2012 > 2013 > 2014 >

22 FEBRUARY *BE KIND REWIND* (film) *RoboCop* is one of the "sweded" movies in Michel Gondry's charming comedy.

24 JULY Darren Aronofsky was announced as the director of a *RoboCop* reboot at San Diego Comic Con.

27 JANUARY-25 AUGUST *ROBOCOP: REVOLUTION* (comic) After acquiring the rights, Dynamite published this six-issue series that embraced the first film's satirical and violent edge. It also featured the debut of ED-309!

4 FEBRUARY *COMMUNITY* (TV) *Kickpuncher*, *Community*'s thinly veiled *RoboCop* spoof, makes its debut.

2 MARCH MGM announced that José Padilha would replace Darren Aronofsky as the director of the *RoboCop* remake.

26 MARCH A *RoboCop* statue is fully funded on Kickstarter (it's due to be unveiled in Detroit in Spring 2014).

JULY-OCTOBER *TERMINATOR/ROBOCOP: KILL HUMAN* (comic) *RoboCop* attempts to travel back in time and stop Skynet in this comic.

DECEMBER-MARCH *2012 ROBOCOP: ROAD TRIP* (comic) OCP take over Old Detroit in the final Dynamite comic series.

3 MARCH Joel Kinnaman confirmed as the actor to play Alex Murphy/RoboCop in the Padilha-helmed remake.

7 JULY A viral site reveals the new look ED-209. It's surprisingly faithful to the original, classic design.

7 AUGUST-PRESENT *ROBOCOP: LAST STAND* (comic) BOOM! Studios obtained the rights to publish a new *RoboCop* series, choosing to adapt Frank Miller's original *RoboCop 3* script.

7 FEBRUARY *ROBOCOP* (film) The Robo-remake is unleashed into UK cinemas. Criminals beware...



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TAP FOR TRAILER

THE REMAKING OF ROBOCOP

OVER 50 PAGES OF EXCLUSIVE, ALL-NEW
CAST AND CREW INTERVIEWS

WE TALK TO:

- JOEL KINNAMAN - ROBOCOP P14
- ABBIE CORNISH - CLARA MURPHY P20
- GARY OLDMAN - DR DENNETT NORTON P26
- MICHAEL KEATON - RAYMOND SELLARS P32
- JAY BARUCHEL - TOM POPE P34
- JACKIE EARLE HALEY - MATTOX P38
- JOSÉ PADILHA - DIRECTOR P42
- MARTIN WHIST - PRODUCTION DESIGNER P48
- JOSHUA ZETUMER - SCRIPTWRITER P54
- PEDRO BROMFMAN - COMPOSER P60

REBOOTING ROBOCOP

THIS ISN'T A REMAKE, IT'S A WHOLE NEW TAKE ON *ROBOCOP*. AND IT COULD BE ONE OF THE BEST FRANCHISE RELAUNCHES EVER, SAYS JOSEPH MCCABE...

// Paul Verhoeven's 1987 classic *RoboCop* is the definitive cyborg movie. Like its protagonist (played by the inimitable Peter Weller), it's the perfect fusion of two seemingly incongruous halves – the visceral and the cerebral. It's arch social commentary and adrenaline mixed in a heady brew of pure '80s sci-fi action. Any remake was bound to generate new levels of skepticism in today's jaded filmgoers, burned out as they are on reconstituted media franchises and nth-degree derivations of popular favourites.

Yet what is hardware (be it computerised, robotic, or cybernetic) if not a generation of technology awaiting an upgrade? In the case of Detroit's legendary machine-man, it's hardly the first time this particular tech has been jumpstarted, since Alex Murphy has already been played by at least four different actors, and inspired three films, two animated series, a live-action TV show, a four-part mini-series, and enough videogames and comic

Michael Fassbender and Belgian star Matthias Schoenaerts were in the running for the role of Alex Murphy, until Padilha met with *The Killing's* Joel Kinnaman. After auditioning no less than three times, the Swedish-born actor won over the studio with his combination of everyman vulnerability and steely-eyed determination. Meanwhile, a host of red-hot and veteran Hollywood stars joined the project. Gary Oldman, no stranger to dark mainstream superhero franchises, came on board to play Dr Dennett Norton, the scientist responsible for reluctantly transforming Murphy into RoboCop, while Michael Keaton beat out Hugh Laurie for the role of OmniCorp CEO Raymond Sellars. *Sucker Punch* star Abbie Cornish joined the cast as Alex's wife, Clara (Ellen in Verhoeven's film). The acclaimed Jackie Earle Haley was brought on as Rick Mattox, RoboCop's grizzled tactical trainer, and the red-hot Jay Baruchel (*This Is The End*, *How To Train Your Dragon*) as OmniCorp's marketing exec Tom Pope. Of course no 21st Century genre franchise would be complete without Samuel

the 1987 film was created at the height of yuppie capitalism, so its concerns were with corporate profiteering at the expense of the working class. In 2013, drone warfare and military-industrial accountability is a hot topic, along with the new American conservatism embodied by Jackson's media pundit. Of course the corporate mindset is again taken to task, particularly its ever-increasing preoccupation with public relations, which inspires the new RoboCop armour colour, a stylish, universal, "tactical" black.

Early footage indicates the 2014 *RoboCop* is more than fully functional, with Alex's new dilemma, and that of his wife, who makes the decision to save his life with cybernetics, akin to that of Marvel superheroes, cursed and tormented, struggling to retain the better parts of themselves even while granted extraordinary abilities. Padilha has boldly chosen to construct a film with few clear-cut villains, eschewing the original's slightly cartoony baddies in favour of greater moral ambiguity, present – in the scenes *SFX* has viewed – in both Oldman's

// "YOU HAVE TO HAVE A RESPECT WHEN YOU ARE TOUCHING A MOVIE LIKE *ROBOCOP*. BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU CAN'T BE AFRAID OF IT..." DIRECTOR JOSÉ PADILHA

books to awaken the 12-year-old in everyone.

Despite the franchise's many iterations, Sony (MGM's parent company) announced it would produce a new *RoboCop* feature in 2005. Official word that a filmmaking auteur with Verhoeven's clout was involved came in 2008, when Darren Aronofsky (*Requiem For A Dream*, *Black Swan*) was confirmed to direct the project, from a script by *Road To Perdition's* David Self, for a 2010 release. But the release date was pushed back, and eventually put on hold because of MGM's financial troubles and a breakdown in negotiations with Aronofsky.

A ROBOCOP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Eventually, the studio signed Brazilian director José Padilha – whose politically conscious action thriller *Elite Squad: The Enemy Within* was the highest-grossing film in his country's history – to direct the film, now written by Hollywood script doctor Joshua Zetumer (of *Quantum Of Solace* and *Sherlock Holmes* fame). With Padilha came his equally acclaimed collaborators, composer Pedro Bromfman and cinematographer Lula Carvalho.

Jackson, who signed on to play Pat Novak, the controversial host of TV show, *The Novak Element*. Zetumer's take on the story differs from that of Verhoeven and his screenwriters, most notably in regards to Alex Murphy himself. In the original, Murphy was killed by a criminal gang, pronounced dead, and his remains used to construct RoboCop. In the new film, Murphy's body is mostly destroyed but his mind remains largely intact and is transferred into a robotic frame as a means of satisfying those demanding a human face on OmniCorp's line of cyborg warriors.

But Murphy finds that his greatest battle is preventing what's left of his humanity from being consumed by the technology keeping him alive. Thus, Murphy's wife, largely absent from the original film, remains a presence in his new life, as does his son David (John Paul Ruttan).

It's perhaps a more apt metaphor for today's society, increasingly surrounded with and consumed by its machines. And it allows Padilha and Zetumer to offer – as Verhoeven did in the time his film was made – commentary on contemporary society. For

well-meaning scientist and in Michael Keaton's corporate leader.

As Padilha – who calls his film a reboot rather than a remake – tells *SFX*, "You have to have a respect when you are touching a movie like *RoboCop*. But at the same time you can't be afraid of it... You can't try to remake it. It's impossible to remake *RoboCop*. I don't know exactly what the intention of the writing, of the directing of [Verhoeven's] *RoboCop* was. But I saw in it a critique of the automation of violence and fascism. The dehumanizing of law enforcement, of soldiers, was a serious thing, and it is right now. So I wanted to make a movie of that. And that's what I did. Once I decided to do it, I just went ahead and did my own take on it. There's really no other way of doing it."

Adds Kinnaman of rebooting a masterpiece, "It's a great responsibility. Especially in a world where there's a lot of remakes being made for cynical economic reasons... The biggest respect you can pay to the original is to acknowledge it as a very intelligent movie, and try to make something intelligent to follow it up with." ●

CRIME HAS
A NEW ENEMY.

JOEL
KINNAMAN

GARY
OLDMAN

MICHAEL
KEATON

AND SAMUEL L.
JACKSON

ROBOCOP

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES AND COLUMBIA PICTURES PRESENT A STRIKE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION "ROBOCOP" ABBIE CORNISH JACKIE EARLE HALEY
MICHAEL K. WILLIAMS JENNIFER EHLE JAY BARUCHEL MUSIC BY PEDRO BROMFMAN COSTUME DESIGNER APRIL FERRY EDITED BY DANIEL REZENDE PETER McNULTY PRODUCTION DESIGNER MARTIN WHIST
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LULA CARVALHO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BILL CARRARO ROGER BIRNBAUM PRODUCED BY MARC ABRAHAM ERIC NEWMAN SCREENPLAY BY JOSHUA ZETUMER DIRECTED BY JOSÉ PADILHA



MGM

RoboCop-Movie.net

Soundtrack on Sony Classical

WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS

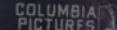
IN ASSOCIATION WITH STRIKE ENTERTAINMENT

A COLUMBIA PICTURES PRODUCTION

"ROBOCOP"

COLUMBIA PICTURES

COMING SOON IN IMAX



JOEL KINNAMAN

- **ROLE:** ALEX MURPHY/ROBOCOP
- **THE KILLING ACTOR TELLS JOSEPH MCCABE HOW PUTTING ON A 250 POUND COSTUME HELPS GET HIM IN THE MOOD TO PLAY A CYBORG LAWMAN**



IMAGE: ACTIONPRESS/REX

BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Actor

BORN: 25 November 1979

FROM: Stockholm, Sweden

GREATEST HITS: *Easy Money*, *The Darkest Hour*, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *Safe House*, *The Killing*

RANDOM FACT: Kinnaman came close to landing the lead roles in two other recent franchise starters/reboots: *Thor* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Unfortunately, he lost out on the former when he was unable to fly to the US to test with star Natalie Portman due to filming obligations in Europe. For George Miller's post-apocalyptic thriller, he was one of three actors considered, but his appearance was deemed to be too youthful. At least that's a nice reason to be rejected.

/// Much like his character Alex Murphy, actor Joel Kinnaman is a man of two worlds. Born in Stockholm to a Swedish mother and an American father, his dual citizenship has helped him star in many prestigious projects on both sides of the Atlantic. His best known role to date is that of Detective Stephen Holder in the widely acclaimed TV murder mystery drama *The Killing*, but he has also starred as Frank Wagner in several instalments of the *Johan Falk* film franchise.

In the new *RoboCop*, Kinnaman is tasked with portraying both family man/undercover cop Alex Murphy and – after his death – his rather more famous cyborg alter ego. But, as Kinnaman reveals to *SFX*, it isn't easy finding the human heart inside of a machine.

SFX: What made you want to play the part of *RoboCop* in this film?

JK: “[Director] José [Padilha] was the big reason I wanted to do this movie in the first place. When I first heard there was gonna be a *RoboCop* remake, I thought to myself, ‘Maybe I’ll see that somewhere down the line, but it’s nothing I’m interested in pursuing myself.’ But then when I heard it was José that was gonna direct it, I became very interested. Because I realised with a director like this they’re really trying to make something interesting of it. I met with José for coffee and lunch, and after that meeting I was desperate to do this movie. I did everything I could to convince him and the studio I was the right person for the job.

“Any time you make a movie with a big budget, people get anxious and they want to protect their investment and they don’t want to take risks; and José has fought very hard and succeeded in making something that has a point of view, and that has a political and a philosophical perspective. Something that’s intelligent and wants to be a real film, even though it’s a big-budget blockbuster type movie.”

SFX: What did you do to try and convince him that you were right for the job?

JK: “Well, I had to audition for it three times. At the time I was shooting *The Killing* in Vancouver – I think it was the second season. I’d fly down to LA on the weekends to audition. So I did that three times.”

SFX: Did you send flowers?

JK: “No. [Laughs.] We’d already met. He appreciated me as a person and as an actor, but there was the need to convince him that I was the right guy, that I could also play this character.”

IMAGES: BARRIS55/ISTOCK, COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES INC.



SFX: Did you have any nerves about taking on a remake when the original has such a fervent fanbase?

JK: "Yeah, sure. It's a great responsibility. Especially in a world where there's a lot of remakes being made, and a lot of them are being made for cynical economic reasons; where there's no real idea behind why you want to do a remake. You just want to take advantage of the branding of the original and that fanbase. But having José as a director and hearing his take on what he wants to do with this movie, it immediately washed away those fears. Because the biggest respect you can pay to the original *RoboCop* is to acknowledge it as a very intelligent movie, which I definitely think that it is, and try to make something intelligent to follow it up with, and not just replay all the old catchphrases and iconic lines. We kept one or two, just as a wink to the fans. But we did not try to remake the movie. If anything you could call it a reboot, because it's a completely different story than the old one."

SFX: How did you prepare for the movie?

JK: "Well there were two parts to preparing. First there was preparing for Alex Murphy, because of the first 20 minutes of the movie, before he becomes *RoboCop*. For me, that was almost the most important part, because that's who he is. Then he becomes *RoboCop*, and of course I have to prepare his movement patterns and all of that. But everything that he's going through, he's going through that for the first time, so that's something that's hard to prepare for. It can also be a benefit to not prepare for it, other than just dramatically. So I prepared for Alex Murphy. He's a street cop working undercover. It was more about finding an urban character that was also a family man."

"Then when it came to *RoboCop*, the movement pattern that I designed was to have just a little wink to Peter Weller's robotic movement pattern, but going with a much more modern idea of what a robot would be in the future, which is not that slow robotic movement pattern, but more that of a superhuman. Then when it came to the action sequences, the way that he

// "WE'RE GOING WITH A MORE MODERN IDEA OF WHAT A ROBOT WOULD MOVE LIKE"



■ ABOVE: ATTACK THE BLOCK! ROBO HITS THE STREETS OF DETROIT.

// "IT'S A CORRUPT FUTURE WHERE COMPANIES ARE ALSO RUNNING FOREIGN POLICIES"

// "IT WAS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE, BUT IT HELPED THE PERFORMANCE"

I had three weeks where I trained with the Swedish special forces."

SFX: How long did it take to put on the RoboCop outfit, and was it easy working with it on?

JK: "We got better and better at putting it on. The first time we put it on it took almost an hour, and by the end of the movie we got it down to 25 – 30 minutes. It's pretty heavy, very uncomfortable. It weighs 25 kilos or 250 pounds. It was very uncomfortable, but in a way it really helped the performance, and in more ways than I expected. I could feel powerful but also weird and awkward and a little naked. That's what Alex Murphy would have felt in that moment – to have your real body removed, but with the same self-awareness you always had."

SFX: How dark does future America look in this movie?

JK: "It's definitely a corrupt future, where big companies are running foreign policies. The military has been automated and unmanned drones are making their own decisions. So there's somebody in a control room that is pulling the trigger on the drones. We have robots and drones making their own decisions based on their programming. It's much more difficult to hold anybody accountable. If you look at the United States, there are lots of wars that the US has been in. The reason that those wars have ended is because there's been a loss of American lives on foreign soil, and that builds political pressure to end the war. So when we're in a situation where there's no pressure, that becomes a dangerous, very quick path to fascism. The movie talks about that."

SFX: Like RoboCop, you often appear very confident in your work. Is there any self-doubt in you?

JK: "All the time. Every day. I'm just a really good actor. [Laughs.] Yeah, I'm very good at masking my self-doubt. I think as an actor and as an artist it's incredibly important to have both. You have to have confidence to be able to lead a movie or lead a play, but at the same time you have to have self-doubt, because otherwise you're never going to evolve. Being self-critical is a part of having self-doubt. You have to doubt yourself at some point. But I think I have a healthy way of looking at myself. When I make mistakes I try to correct them, and I don't try to beat myself up too much. Sometimes maybe you come across more confident than you really >

moves with his weapon, we talked about it, and we decided that his movement pattern should be that of the special forces – that would be the programming that they gave him. But then, of course, there's also his awareness of the calibre of weapons and how they would affect him. If he's moving into a situation, he can read all the weapons and know their calibre and he knows if he can be damaged by them or not. If he's not, then he wouldn't find cover in the same way that a real cop would do. Because he's not afraid of getting hit in the same way. Those were the ideas behind it. So what I did was

■ **BELOW:** HAPPY FAMILIES... FOR NOW. WHAT'S THE BETTING THINGS GO WRONG?

■ **MIDDLE:** THERE'S VERY LITTLE WE CAN SAY ABOUT THIS EXCEPT, "KABOOM!"

■ **BOTTOM:** "TYPICAL – AND THIS WAS A BRAND NEW PAIR OF GLOVES TOO."





are. I'm a pretty confident person, but of course I have self-doubt as well."

SFX: Murphy's wife and son were largely absent in the original film. How does their presence here affect him?

JK: "Yeah, it's a much bigger part of this movie. I feel like it's sort of the centre of his journey – his loss of ability to be close to his family and to be physical. He can't touch his son or his wife in the same way. He's very close to his family. The big difference between this one and the original is that here Alex doesn't die. He's self-aware, he comes to realise what's happened to him when he wakes up. He's pretty much amputated from his throat down. And because he's not dead there is this sort of legal conundrum over who has ownership of him and his time. Of course the company that has manufactured this system that can keep him alive, they own that. But do they own him? Does he have a right to be with his family? Does he have any choice in his actions or is he their property? His struggle to reconnect with his family, and to find out what's happened to him, that is sort of the central theme of the movie."

SFX: Why do you think that element is important to this particular story?

JK: "The difference is that he didn't die, so he has this awareness from the beginning. What José wanted to explore... We're reaching a point now where we are soon gonna have manufactured hearts and organs that need to be maintained by a company. There's a whole question of ownership – will you always have ownership of your own life? That's a subject that the movie talks about, and it's an important philosophical subject to discuss in this movie. I think that was one of the reasons why he never died – he was still alive."

// "I THINK IT'S A VERY VIOLENT FILM. THERE'S A LOT OF ACTION"

■ BELOW:
NEAR-
FUTURE
DETROIT IS
STILL THE
FILM'S KEY
LOCATION.



SFX: How violent is this *RoboCop* going to be? The original movie was certainly strong in its gore and action content.

JK: "I think it's a very violent film. It's not rated R, so it doesn't have the goriness to it that the original had, but there's a lot of action in this movie, and a lot of people getting killed and injured and hurt. It's a violent time. There's no gratuitous violence in this movie. Not that Verhoeven's portrayal of violence was gratuitous – it was the absolute opposite. He was very aware of how he portrayed violence, and many times they would edit it down in his movies, and then it would appear to be more violent. He had a very clear idea of portraying violence. That was very important to him as a director. That's why the original is so violent. He sort of went over the top to make it comedic. Because when you make it so extremely violent, it becomes comedic. That was his idea. So we're not carrying Verhoeven's tone or his ideas. But it's an action drama."

SFX: Can you describe the relationship between *RoboCop* and Michael Keaton's character – Raymond Sellars?

JK: "Well he's the owner of the company. He ordered the system, and it's his idea. When things start to go wrong, Sellars starts making some very questionable and selfish decisions, and he's gonna have to answer for them."

SFX: It appears that we'll see more of Murphy's face in this film than in the original movie. Does he only wear the visor when he's at work? And was that part of what attracted you to the role?

JK: "Yes, of course. You're already very limited by not having a body to express your emotions with, so you're limited to just the face. It's just a big challenge. Then to not have your eyes, that makes it very, very difficult. So it was an important decision I think, for the drama of the movie, that the face was visible. What happens here is when a crime is being committed in close proximity, or when he gets mad, he goes into sort of an action mode and the visor comes down."

"But it also has a reason in the movie. One of the reasons for it is because *RoboCop* is supposed to be the pilot product for OmniCorp, to repeal a Senate law that has forbidden automated law enforcement. This is a huge loss in revenue for the companies manufacturing these systems. It's because the public is afraid and the politicians are afraid of having someone who is not accountable for their actions. So as a segue way into changing that public opinion, they create this system with *RoboCop* where they put a man inside a machine – and it has to be someone whom people can relate to. That's also part of the reason why the face is visible." ●



■ **RIGHT:** "YES, I PREFER THE SILVER LOOK TOO. I THINK IT BRINGS OUT MY CHIN."

■ **FAR RIGHT:** IT WAS LUCKY FOR MURPHY THAT HIS WIFE WAS INTO BLACK RUBBER.

■ **BELOW:** MURPHY UNDERCOVER. YOU CAN TELL COS HE'S HOLDING HIS GUNS FUNNY.



ABBIE CORNISH

- ROLE: CLARA MURPHY
- THE AUSTRALIAN ACTRESS TELLS JOSEPH MCCABE THAT SHE WOULD HAVE LEAPT AT THE CHANCE TO PLAY "MRS ROBOCOP" EVEN IF SHE WAS ONLY IN A COUPLE OF SCENES



BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Actor

BORN: 7 August 1982

FROM: Lochinvar, Australia

GREATEST HITS: *Somersault, Candy, Bright Star, Legend Of The Guardians: The Owls Of Ga'Hoole, Limitless, Sucker Punch, The Girl, Seven Psychopaths*

RANDOM FACT: Cornish's next film, *Solace*, finds her reteaming with *Seven Psychopaths* co-star Colin Farrell, as she plays an FBI agent hunting a serial killer alongside a psychic (played by Anthony Hopkins).

// If there's one *RoboCop* actor who was born to star in the 2014 film, it's Abbie Cornish. A lifelong fan of the original, Cornish (as she reveals to *SFX*) was thrilled to learn her role – that of Clara, Alex Murphy's wife – would be expanded considerably for the story's new incarnation, a film she calls “the easiest I've ever made.” Funny, frank and down-to-earth, the Aussie bombshell has the rare ability to capture both critical accolades (in films like *Candy* and *Bright Star*) and fanboy hearts (with Zack Snyder's *Sucker Punch* and *Seven Psychopaths*).

SFX: Your character isn't present much in the original *RoboCop*. Did that give you a greater feeling of freedom to make the role your own, since fans wouldn't be comparing you to another actor?

Abbie Cornish: “Yeah, definitely. Essentially, the part in the original is all flashbacks and memories, and it's quite small, the role, because it's in very specific moments. So when this role was pitched to me, because there was no script at the time, I was told that the role would be in real time, and more integrated into what happens in regards to his injury and him becoming a robot. But they weren't sure of the size of the role. They said, ‘It's gonna be a good role of course, and the film's gonna be great, but it might be three scenes, it might be five scenes, it might be ten.’ Then I got really lucky because they wrote the script and issued it; and I was reading it thinking I'd be reading a *RoboCop* script and every now and then the name Clara would come up. But I was like, ‘Oh man!’ She was very prominent. I was like, ‘This is amazing. I kind of hit the jackpot, because I'm not only in this film, but the role's much bigger than anyone ever pitched it to me.’ The whole thing was really fun. So you're right – I was given more liberty and freedom. Even the name's different – originally she was Ellen, now she's Clara.”

SFX: The film asks what makes a man: his heart, his body, his mind? Clara appears to see the man inside the machine.

AC: “Yeah, there's so much stuff off-screen with a character like that. But [as an audience member] you don't want to watch it. [Laughs.] But I'm sure there was a lot of coming to terms with the facts. She knew all the specs. They sit her down and [explain] after the accident, and she knows exactly what's wrong with him, exactly what they're going to do to him. Much more than you ever see on screen. So she knows when he returns that he's going to be

IMAGE: PAWEŁ GAUL/ISTOCK

90% robot. But the pitch that she's given in regards to him is that his mind and who he is will remain; the man will remain inside the machine. I think at the end of the day that's why she chooses to keep him alive. Because how do you take the man away from your son?"

SFX: There's a moment where she's asked to make a decision quickly regarding Alex's fate. How good are you at making decisions when people are holding a gun to your head?

AC: "I've never been in a circumstance like that. [Laughs.] So it's hard to think in terms of... I mean, that's a life or death decision. I'm thinking of what I can relate it to... Growing up on a farm I did make a lot of life and death decisions for animals, because I had to. I grew up on a big farm with hundreds of animals. So you would see animals die and be born and accidents all the time. In answer to your question, I'm a decision maker. I make decisions fast. But I would say they're based on my heart and instinct. Not that it draws a comparison, but in my work all my decisions are made with heart and instinct. I have a business mind, just because my father's a businessman. You have to be in this world. If you can talk to your agent in a very practical way, it's nice to have that conversation as well as the conversation of, 'Oh, I love this, and this director's great, and I want to play this role.' It's inevitable that you'll have the other conversations as well. But it's nice if you can utilise both. But like I said, I've never been in this situation. It's sort of a 'what if?' in a way."

SFX: It seems like she's the heart of the story in some ways, having to make the heaviest decision.

AC: "To be honest, shooting it was quite fun, and really quite easy. I would travel back and forth a lot. So I would go to Toronto and I would shoot, and the production was really great in compacting my work, so I would shoot and then I'd fly home. Then I'd come back and I'd shoot and I'd fly home. What was nice about that is it gave me a momentum and a focus, so as soon as I got on that airplane I was going to be Clara Murphy in *RoboCop* world. I >

// "SHE KNOWS THAT WHEN HE RETURNS HE IS GOING TO BE 90% ROBOT"

// "EVERYONE LOVES JOSÉ. THEY WANT TO DO EVERY FILM WITH HIM"



OMNICORP



// "WE WATCHED ROBOCOP AS KIDS OVER AND OVER AGAIN. WE WATCHED IT UNTIL THAT VHS TAPE HAD BURNT OUT!"

called it RoboLand, Toronto, for a while. But that's what it was for me. Yeah, that's what it was.

"And it was kind of nice, because as soon as I got on that plane and got home I'd just change the gears back to home life. I know it seems very dramatic, and it is, but the set was so light and easy-going and fun, and everyone was really professional, and everyone loves working for José. They want to do every film with him. So there's a real camaraderie, a collaborative atmosphere, but a really fun, easy-going atmosphere. We'd be doing a scene, cut, JP would be like, 'Tag, you're it,' and then he'd run off and I'd chase after him. We had so much fun all the time that I never was stuck in that heaviness."

SFX: Was it a refreshing change to play a mother after some of your more leftfield roles, like in *Candy*?

AC: "I think it's a beautiful thing. It's a little bit like life imitates art, and art imitates life. It's kind of nice to step into those shoes and play the loving wife, the very grounded, stable working woman who's strong, confident, knows herself, but is very nurturing. She loves her family, loves her child, would do anything for her child. So often with films like *Candy* and *The Girl and Somersault*, I've played these pretty complex, crazy, messed-up characters. So to go and play a character and go to work where the wedding ring goes on and I'm stepping into quite nice mum-but-fashionable-working-woman clothing, and the hair is done and there's a centre to that character, that I just really loved. Everything could just come from inside. I didn't have to make it convoluted and a puzzle. I didn't have to turn it into a little enigma that I'd worked out that no one knows about and then perform it, and then people would go, 'What did you just do?' 'I don't know!' It was just really straightforward. It was, for lack of a better word, linear."

For me, so much of my work was separate from all of the crazy action stuff and the sequences. That's why I'd go home – they'd be shooting a sequence for two weeks that I wasn't in. So it was a little easier for me. Because so much of

my stuff was grounded in a home or in the car, at the school. I'd be going into police headquarters, but with my son. So I had very strong links to normal life. Almost every scene is all about Alex, or all about my son. There's one time that Clara says, 'I'm falling apart.' But she says, 'You have to come home. Your son needs you. He's scared to show his face at school. He's having nightmares. He's falling apart. I'm falling apart.' It's the only time she really addresses herself, which I think is a really motherly thing to do."

SFX: Apparently you were in one green-screen sequence.

AC: "I did one somewhere along the line... You're right – the end sequence! Everyone sort of culminates in this ending. She's there to find information and she gets caught up in that. The stakes go up."

SFX: So were you dodging any shrapnel or rubble?

AC: "I'd like to say I was, but I wasn't really. [Laughs.] I was on a helipad, that was cool. But it was all green. There were fake robots and men in green suits and we had to look at dots on walls."

SFX: Do you consider yourself tech savvy?

AC: "Yeah, I love technology. I'm a bit of a tech geek. Because I'm into music and computers and digital technology. I'll get photos and put them through editing processes. I love film, and I like taking photographs on film, but I love digital too, and being able to put them through [a computer] and manipulate them. I'm a bit of a tech head, yep."

SFX: If you could get a robot do something for you...?

AC: "I don't think I would. [Laughs.] Even though I like technology, I don't need it to replace humans or pets or anything like that. I don't need a RoboDog. [Laughs.]"

SFX: Not even a robot to clean out the cat's litter tray?

AC: "Nah. I'll do that. Keeps it real. [Laughs.]"

SFX: How many times have you watched the original?

AC: "As a kid, over and over again. We had a VHS [player] and we lived on a farm. So my brothers were like, 'Yeah, *RoboCop*!' We watched it till that tape burnt out. So I knew it like the back of my hand. As soon as this gig came up... You hear things all the time: 'They're making this' or 'They're remaking that' or 'Any interest in this, blah, blah, blah 3?' Usually there's a draw, right? I'm sure you hear a lot of actors go, 'Well, the reason I did *Madagascar 3* is because my children love the first one.' Do you know what I mean? Then it all makes

■ LEFT:
DANCING
CHEEK TO
CHEEK –
BACK WHEN
MURPHY
STILL HAD
CHEEKS.



■ **ABOVE:** CLARA FACES A LIFE-CHANGING DECISION.

■ **BELOW:** DEBATE WAS HEATED OVER WHO GOT TO KEEP THE ROBOCOP ACTION FIGURE.

sense. That world is something to you. For me, *'RoboCop'*? Oh my gosh, yes. The role of the wife? Ahhh, yes! Mrs RoboCop? I'm straight in there! Yeah, I was really excited about it."

SFX: If this film connects with audiences, there may be sequels. Would you be up for reprising your role?

AC: "In the right circumstances, yeah. I wouldn't want to say yes and then have the director change and roles change and stuff like that, and then not do it. Because then everyone's like, 'But you said...' I think in the right circumstances, because I'm very particular about who I work with. Just because it's Clara Murphy and it's *RoboCop* doesn't totally seal the deal. When they pitched *RoboCop* to me they said, 'The director's José Padilha. Here's his work if you haven't seen it yet.' He's an incredible director. *Elite Squad 1* and *Elite Squad 2*, his documentary filmmaking – I mean, insanely good, across the board. Everything you watch of his is great. 'Who's acting in it?' 'Gary Oldman, Samuel Jackson, this guy called Joel Kinnaman... Here's his film.' You're like, 'Whoa, this is a recipe for

something really great and really enjoyable.' So all that has to be there."

SFX: So you're not signed on for more than one?

AC: "No, I don't think anyone is, except for probably Joel."

SFX: On most films, women are forced to spend the most time getting made up, but on this film Joel spent the most time doing so. Did you feel empathy for him?

AC: "Not at all. [Laughs.] No, I don't know. I definitely was like, 'Dude, you must be hot in that suit.' He's like, 'It's alright.' 'It'll probably be good to get those things off, right, so you can walk around. Do you need anything? Any water?' There's that sort of thing. He could sit, he could lean. He had a lot of people helping him. He had a suit guy, a very cool guy who was with him 24/7. But he probably got sick of everyone asking him, 'Do you need anything? Do you want me to get you anything?' Because it was a cool group. Even with Gary and I – Gary would be like, 'I'm off to craft service – do you want anything?' It just had that vibe on set. I'm like, 'Sure, Mr. Oldman!' [Laughs.]"



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- **ROLE:** DR DENNETT NORTON
- **JOSEPH MCCABE TALKS TO THE LEGENDARY ACTOR ABOUT HIS ROLE AS ROBOCOP'S CREATOR, AND ABOUT THE NEW FILM'S SURPRISINGLY TIMELY THEMES.**



BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Actor

BORN: 21 March 1958

FROM: New Cross, London

GREATEST HITS: *Sid And Nancy*, *JFK*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *Léon: The Professional*, *The Fifth Element*, *Air Force One*, *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*, *The Dark Knight*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*

RANDOM FACT: Oldman was almost cast as a well-known cyborg himself, when he auditioned for the voice role of General Grievous in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith*. (Though Oldman was a friend of producer Rick McCallum, the part eventually went to Skywalker Sound editor Matthew Wood.)

The quintessential movie chameleon, Gary Oldman burst into mainstream cinema playing some of the most nefarious villains in screen history, from Count Dracula (in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*) to Lee Harvey Oswald (in Oliver Stone's *JFK*). In the last decade, however, he's won the devotion of countless genre fans by playing good guys like Sirius Black (in the *Harry Potter* film series) and lawman Jim Gordon (in Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy). But whether hero or villain, Oldman digs into his roles to find the humanity in his characters. In the new *RoboCop*, he plays Dr Dennett Norton, the scientist responsible for (re)creating the titular crime-fighting machine man.

SFX: How would you describe Dr Norton?

Gary Oldman: "I guess you would call Dr Norton a neuroengineer. Through his benefactor, OmniCorp, and Raymond Sellars – Michael Keaton's part – he is researching and developing cutting-edge bionic technology. So he's quite a clever chap, a sort of neurosurgeon."

SFX: Did you meet with biotech people in preparing for the role?

GO: "I made it up. I made it all up."

SFX: But you've said that you think the film's technology is feasible...

GO: "Well only the stuff I've seen online. Because now they're grafting nerves into muscle. There's a guy who actually lost his arm or lost part of his arm in a motorcycle accident, and they left the nerve endings and then they kind of grafted that into the existing muscle. It grows and stimulates that area. Then through the electrodes and everything that they plant into the muscle, just using your mind you can control the hand and the arm. Using your thought process, it goes down [there]. One guy, actually, has got an artificial leg, and they kept the sciatic nerve and they sort of grafted it into the thigh. Then that grows, so it harvests other nerve endings. So through the spinal cord he can pretty much get around like normal. That's what the character is really involved with."

SFX: Does Dr Dennett have a dark side?

GO: "No, there's nothing dark about him at all. The only sort of dilemma that he faces – like a lot of these people I would imagine – is that he doesn't want to develop anything for the military, and he's quite explicit about that. But he gets a very big carrot dangled in front of him, because OmniCorp says, 'If you get on board with this project,

IMAGES: SUMMERSET RETRIEVERS/ISTOCK; COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES INC.

we'll give you unlimited funding.' So it's a difficult place to be, because it's like someone saying to St Jude's [Hospital], 'We're just gonna write this enormous check, and you can continue with all your research. You won't even have to fundraise. We'll just write you a check. But we'd like you to do this...'"

SFX: In the film, it appears that America is the lone holdout for these military units, these robots, because there's no human component in them.

GO: "It's a difficult one. I think the film will probably end up being quite topical. 'Drone', for instance, is a word that's on everybody's lips. But when the film was in development three years ago, it was less in the forefront. I don't know – what is the difference between somebody sending a drone and bombing a target thousands of miles away from a PlayStation, to a guy in cockpit a thousand feet away dropping a bomb? It's a tough one. If you're gonna have an enemy and they want to harm you then there's gonna be wars and there's gonna be collateral damage. It's just who we are, isn't it? But the character doesn't really want to be involved in anything like that. The big question the film offers up, I think, is that what they don't foresee or calculate is emotion and the soul of the man. It starts to override the system.

"I mean, we sat down for four weeks in the rehearsal room with [director] José [Padilha] and tried to get rid of all the stupid people doing stupid things in the movie. You know, *Iron Man* is a ride – it's a great ride – [but] no one can fly from Malibu to Afghanistan. And if he did, where would he stop? Where would your layover be? You gotta think about stuff like that. Because José said, 'What I don't want to have is the refrigerator moment, where you're watching the movie, you go home, you open the refrigerator to get a beer or milk or whatever, and you go, "Hang on a minute, how did he know that...?"' You get all that sort of techno-speak [in movies] and all that stuff, but when you really look at it and analyse it, landing nuclear bombs on meteors that are hurtling towards the earth and stuff like that...?!"

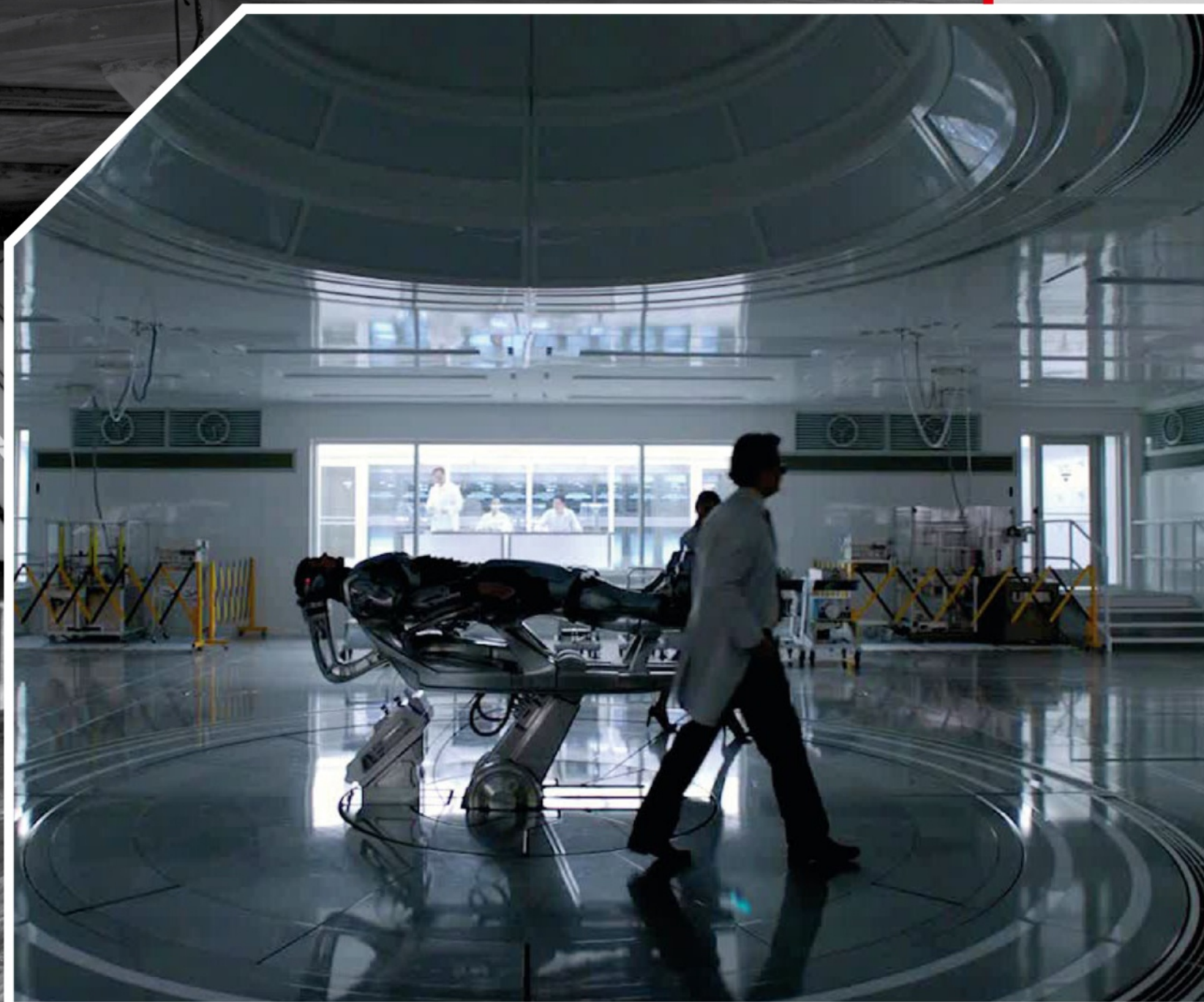
"This is very reality based. So we worked very hard. José would say, 'Why would your character say that? He wouldn't say that. We take that for granted. We know that. That just sounds like exposition.' He said, 'Get rid of that. Don't say that. That doesn't make sense.' So we tried to make it as intelligent as we possibly could, even though it's a genre movie and it's *RoboCop*, to give it an internal logic. I mean, much of this is now science fact – isn't it? – more >

// "THIS IS VERY REALITY BASED. WE TRIED VERY HARD TO GIVE IT INTERNAL LOGIC"



// "THE RELATIONSHIP I
HAVE WITH ROBOCOP IS
LIKE A FATHER AND SON"

■ BELOW: SEE,
BIG SINISTER
HIGH TECH
BASES ARE ALL
VERY WELL,
BUT IT COULD
REALLY DO WITH
SOME FLOWERS.



than science fiction. Look at *Dick Tracy* – we're gonna have those watches! With work in this field, I don't see why you couldn't have – maybe not to the extreme that we have in the movie, but – someone who is made up of 50% robotic parts. It seems anything is possible."

SFX: How techie are you?

GO: "How techie? My video machine is still blinking twelve o'clock. [Laughs.] I've got two sons who are 14 and 16, and I say to them, 'How do I get onto this thing?' or 'How do I do this?' or 'How do I work that out?' It's a whole new generation,

where they get a thing and they don't even have a name for it... Did you ever see that film about the old rock band getting back together? *Strange Fruit*, with Bill Nighy? He's in a big mansion, and he's sort of a retired rock star, only barely hanging on to the mansion. He's trying to watch motor racing, and he's clicking this thing, and the curtains are opening. And he's going, 'I just want to watch the f**king movie!' That's me – 'What the f**k? I just want to watch...' I'm looking at the time, and I've gotta watch *Boardwalk Empire*, so I yell into the kitchen, 'What bloody channel is it on?' My son goes, 'Five-oh-two!' 'Thank you!'"

SFX: Did José have a hard time on this film with the RoboCop suits, or was he able to do everything he wanted to do?

GO: "Yeah, everything he wanted to do. What's partly intrigued me... What's interesting, first of all, is that he didn't want to remake the first one. He thought it's a very good film. Actually, I re-watched it and I thought, 'You know, it's not bad.' He said, 'I think it's terrific, and why would I want to remake something that really works?' I mean, you know he was a physicist before he became a director, so when you have a problem with the script, he just says, 'Oh, just say...' and he rattles off all this stuff. I'm like, 'Give me a pen. What was that again?' He says, 'Oh, this is what's happening to him. We're in the lab...' and he sort of writes the script on the spot.

"But what I like is that he's in that sort of arena of Tomas Alfredson making *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. It's Alfonso Cuarón making *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*. If this were Michael Bay, you wouldn't even have to go buy a ticket, would you? It's Alfonso Cuarón, it's José. It's got a pedigree to it. It's more appealing to me going into it, saying, 'I like this guy. I like his other stuff.' This is kind of him first dipping his toe into pop culture. It might be his last, because this is about as pop as it gets! He's someone trying something different, but bringing his own sensitivity to it, coming from that world. So I've more hope for it.

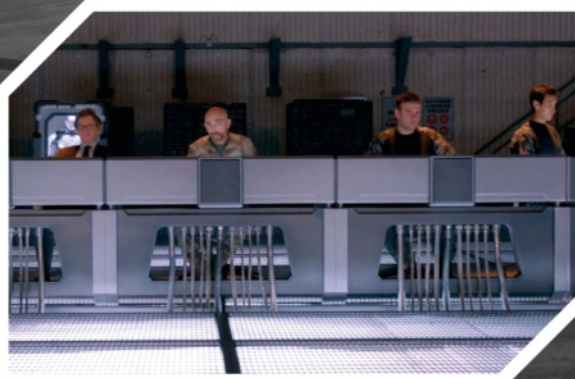
"It's a story that you can definitely connect with. It's *Beauty And The Beast*. It's *Frankenstein*. The relationship I have with RoboCop throughout the film, it's a scientist and a subject, [but] there's a real sort of bond, a relationship. It's sort of like a father/son, Frankenstein/creature [relationship]. It's that."

SFX: What makes a man – is it his heart, his head, his body? It seems the film has a way of breaking that down.

GO: "It's lovely. There's an exchange at one point where we reconvene in the head office. We're having problems with him. We're sitting there and we're saying, 'Look, we're in uncharted water.' There's going >

■ **BELOW:** OMNICORP ONLY HIRES THE BEST AND MOST RESPONSIBLE STAFF. AHM.

■ **BOTTOM:** 'AS YOU CAN SEE, MURPHY HAS NOT HAD A VERY GOOD DAY.'



// "HE GETS CORRUPTED A BIT. HE'S JUST IN TOO DEEP. HE SELLS HIS SOUL A BIT TO THE DEVIL"

to be – well, to use a word that's used a lot – glitches. There's a glitch in the system. The man is overriding the machine. And the very cynical attorney turns and says, 'What [do] you mean? His soul?' That's the thing we just hadn't really thought about. Then he starts to investigate his own murder."

SFX: Speaking of soul, is there a level on which your character functions as the movie's conscience? When Murphy's wife is about to let Murphy become RoboCop, Norton tells her, "Don't do this."

GO: "Yeah, I guess he is. He gets corrupted a bit. He's just in too deep. He sells his soul a bit to the devil. And when the system doesn't work, instead of being given the time... It's like Obamacare – 'It ain't ready, but we've gotta get it out there.' 'But it doesn't work.' 'It doesn't matter, because we have a deadline.'

"So they put this guy on the street. There are things that we're still tweaking, and instead of being able to take him back into a lab, and work on those things as my character would, with a conscience and a moral compass, saying, 'We really need to look at this,' I've got a top guy saying, 'We haven't got time. We've got a presentation and you need to get him on the street.'

"The only thing I can do is dope him up, just to get him out there. Then at the end of the movie, the doctor takes responsibility for it. He should've said, 'No.' But his signature is on the paper."

SFX: Norton is an unusual character for this type of movie. He's a good man who's corrupted by outside forces, whereas oftentimes in films the corruption comes from within the scientist. They're frequently portrayed as crazy maniacs.

GO: "Yeah, he's not like that. It's not, 'Oh my God, it's alive.' When you meet him, he's only there at the institute to enable

amputees to actually live normal lives. He's not a bad guy. This corporation... he gets lured by the temptation of funding, as I'm sure a lot of people do. Actually, the whole initial launch of RoboCop is a success, but we didn't calculate emotion in the thing."

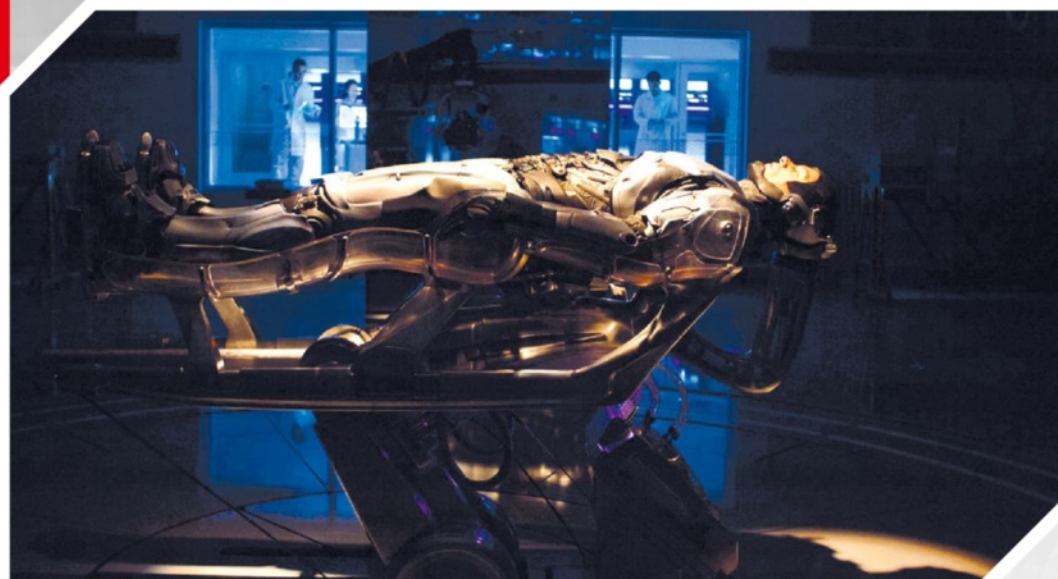
SFX: You said that José didn't want to remake *RoboCop*. What sort of film did José want to make?

GO: "I think he wanted to explore that thing of the heart and the head. What is a piece of work? What is the essence of a man? Taking those ideas from the first one, because he thought it was a terrific movie and there were great things and great ideas in it, he wanted to expand on that further with his own comments."

SFX: As an actor, you bring humanity to a movie, no matter how big it is. What's the trick to that? You talked about pedigree – how do you bring your own pedigree and soul to a character when there's often so much piled on top of a Hollywood film?

GO: "Well, I think you've got to like the characters. You have to find some sort of redeeming thing in them. You've got to be very careful not to sort of put funny hats on people and laugh at them. You can't laugh at a character because he doesn't have the right wallpaper. You can't patronise them, you've got to find something that you can like or understand. Many, many years ago, someone asked me to play Charles Manson, and I had absolutely no interest in it. First of all, there's Roman Polanski, who's still around, and the family. No one would want to go through that, what they went through. So [I declined] out of respect really for the family. Also, I can't think of one f**king redeeming thing about that man. How can I play that, yeah? Who would want to? I've played just about everything, but that, that was my wall."

■ BELOW:
"WAKEY,
WAKEY."
MURPHY'S
NEW LIFE
BEGINS.



■ **RIGHT:** OLDMAN AND KEATON DEBATE WHICH BATMAN WAS BETTER. POSSIBLY.

■ **FAR RIGHT:** DR NORTON HAS SOME TEETHING TROUBLES WITH ROBOCOP.

■ **BELOW:** "I'M SORRY MURPHY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR GLOVE IS EITHER."



MICHAEL KEATON

- **ROLE:** RAYMOND SELLARS
- **THE FORMER BATMAN PLAYS** ANOTHER CHARACTER IN LOVE WITH STUPIDLY EXPENSIVE GADGETS (THOUGH PERHAPS A MORE MORALLY DUBIOUS ONE) – THE BOSS OF OMNICORP



BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Actor

BORN: 5 September 1951

FROM: Pennsylvania

GREATEST HITS: *Batman*, *Beetlejuice*, *Pacific Heights*, *Jackie Brown*, *Toy Story 3*

RANDOM FACT: Michael Keaton (whose real name is Michael Douglas, but that was already taken) played Ray Nicolette in both *Jackie Brown* (directed by Quentin Tarantino) and *Out Of Sight* (directed by Steven Soderbergh). The connection, of course, is that they were both based on Elmore Leonard novels.

SFX: What appealed to you about this project?
Michael Keaton: “As you will hear other people say, the main appeal about it was working with director José Padilha. He is just tremendous!”

SFX: How did Padilha convince you to take part in the movie?

MK: “I think I was on my ranch when I spoke to him on the phone. I wasn’t sure we would agree on our thoughts about the role, but we did.”

SFX: What were your thoughts on how the character of Raymond Sellars, the head of OmniCorp, should be?

MK: “I just didn’t want him to be that hand-rubbing kind of villain that wants to take over the world. I wanted to avoid that cliché, and José – who might be the most intelligent director I have ever worked with – made sure that was the case.”

SFX: So, how did you find him on the page once you received the script?

MK: “I found him very interesting, because I don’t believe my character is necessarily flat-out wrong. It’s not really about the money for him.”

SFX: What do you believe are his motivations then?

MK: “Raymond Sellars is a big thinker who truly believes that there is real benefit in his robotic approach to enforcing law and order. He would probably argue that there is a moral reason to do this. I think he wants to be an achiever and that he is curious about things that will change the world. And lot of it is probably ego...”

SFX: So you don’t see your character as necessarily evil then?

MK: “No, I don’t, although he does do a couple of things that make you go, ‘Wow, wait a minute now!’ I guess that point is when he starts to rationalise his actions and just doesn’t want to stop and think that maybe what he is doing is incorrect.”

SFX: How did you prepare for the role?

MK: “Apart from what was on the page I talked to different scientists and robotic experts, like Hugh Herr at MIT and others. I wanted to know what was going on and what the moral implications were. Where all of this is headed is so interesting to me.”

SFX: How did you feel after getting to spend time with them?

MK: “When I came away from talking to these guys I was really buzzing with

IMAGE: ISTOCK; COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES INC.

the information they gave me! There are unbelievably wonderful things that are being done to help people when it comes to, for instance, creating artificial limbs. So there is that positive side of it, but then there are also other implications..."

SFX: Why do actors normally agree that it is more fun to play the villain?

MK: "Because there is generally more meat in those characters. I guess it's one of those clichés that is actually true."

SFX: Did you ever go and see the original 1987 *RoboCop*?

MK: "I didn't, but I did read an interesting review recently where a guy said that he had seen it again now and appreciated it even more than when it came out, because it was satirical and had messages. His take was that it wasn't a stupid movie at all."

SFX: And what did you think of José Padilha's vision for this story?

MK: "After talking to him several times I thought that if he could manage to do half of what he was planning it could be very intelligent and entertaining."

SFX: Joel Kinnaman is the man chosen to play Alex Murphy/RoboCop. What can you say about him?

MK: "That he is a terrific actor and a very smart man. There is a great group of people on this film."

SFX: And what is it like to work with an actor of the calibre of Gary Oldman?

MK: "It's great! We were both excited to work with each other, which I have to admit was flattering for me..."

SFX: How do you generally choose the films you are going to work on?

MK: "There is a different combination of reasons for me to do a movie, but in the end you always want to work with really good directors like José, which is not easy because they don't make a lot of movies. Generally speaking, I have more of an interest in acting now than I have had in a long time."

SFX: So, how would you describe *RoboCop* then?

MK: "I would describe it as a thinking man's action movie. *RoboCop* is a very intelligent approach to the themes it touches, and it looks unbelievable!"

SFX: Having worn the Batman suit, did you sympathise with what Joel Kinnaman was experiencing?

MK: "Yes because it's something you have

to overcome, and there were moments I kind of knew what he was going through. It's not easy to be in this giant black robotic looking suit while at the same time trying to stay true to the performance. With Batman we knew that if we went off the wrong path it could just end up looking really stupid."

SFX: But were you ever tempted to try on the *RoboCop* suit yourself?

MK: "No! However, I have to admit that we have come a long way. That suit looks much more comfortable than the one I had to wear back in the day..."

// "I DIDN'T WANT SELLARS TO BE THAT KIND OF HAND-RUBBING VILLAIN CLICHE"

SFX: What would you say this movie asks in regards to the use of technology?

MK: "It's the question of to what extent we use technology or it uses us."

SFX: How good are you with technology?

MK: "I am getting better, because I don't think there is a choice. It fascinates me."

SFX: What fascinates you about it?

MK: "Many things... For instance, I'm blown away to know there is an application about birds that will tell you exactly what bird you are listening to and where it lives!"

JAY BARUCHEL

- **ROLE:** TOM POPE
- **IS BLACK THE NEW SILVER? OR VICE VERSA? SLEAZY EXEC TOM POPE IS THE MAN WHO HAS TO MARKET ROBOCOP IN THE NEW MOVIE. JOSEPH MCCABE TALKS TO JAY BARUCHEL AND DISCOVERS A TRUE ROBO FAN...**



BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Actor

BORN: 9 April 1982

FROM: Ottawa, Ontario

GREATEST HITS: *Almost Famous*, *Undeclared*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Tropic Thunder*, *How To Train Your Dragon*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, *This Is The End*

RANDOM FACT: A lifelong fan of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, Baruchel's favorite author is Stephen King. His favourite of King's numerous novels is *The Regulators*.

Jay Baruchel has been an idiosyncratic presence in films since his role as a Led Zeppelin groupie in Cameron Crowe's acclaimed *Almost Famous*. A regular in director Judd Apatow's comedies, Baruchel turned to writing his own with *Goon*, about the national sport of his native Canada, hockey. He's also begun penning screenplays in one of his favorite genres – horror – adapting Kickstart Comics' *Random Acts Of Violence*, the story of comic book creators who find their character Slasher coming to life in spectacularly grisly fashion.

In recent years, Baruchel has served as a leading man in films like *She's Out Of My League* and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, as well as last year's hit comedy *This Is The End* (co-starring fellow Apatow players Seth Rogen and James Franco). *SFX* readers may know Baruchel best, however, as the voice of Hiccup, the hero of DreamWorks Animation's blockbuster *How To Train Your Dragon*, and its upcoming sequel *How To Train Your Dragon 2*. In the new *RoboCop*, he plays Tom Pope, OmniCorp's soulless head of marketing. *SFX* speaks with Baruchel from his home in Montreal, where he describes making the sci-fi reboot as something of a dream come true.

SFX: Having interviewed you before, I know you're quite a big genre fan. Was *RoboCop* a touchstone film for you?

JAY BARUCHEL: "Oh yeah. Big, big time. Pretty much everything Verhoeven made, but especially collaborating with the people he did on that one. In a huge way, man, just like everyone else. Personally, I was always attracted to number two, to be honest, the Irvin Kershner film, just because I thought Cain was the f**king best bad guy. I need to mention that when I was a kid I played a lot of video games, and I was piss poor at pretty much all of them. I only ever beat two video games, which were the second *Super Mario Bros*, and then the real one, *RoboCop Versus The Terminator*. Which was also an exceedingly gory game for the time it came out it. So the answer is yes, I was inundated and connected to *RoboCop* for most of my life. [Laughs.]"

SFX: Since you're a connoisseur, the fact that you signed on for this film says, in a way, more than Gary Oldman signing on. What is it about this take that makes it more than the average remake?

JB: "Well, it was a combination of things. You mentioned Gary Oldman, and in all honesty and transparency he's been one of my acting heroes since I was about 12 or 13

IMAGE: PAWEL GAUL/ISTOCK

years old. I never thought I'd even get to meet him let alone get to work with him. So already I was like, 'Holy f**k. That's gonna be cool.'

"It was also that Michael Keaton would be there; that it was shooting in Toronto, an hour's flight from where I live – and then when they told me that José was gonna direct it! I had been a fan of the *Elite Squad* movies long before this *RoboCop* was ever mentioned. He's somebody I was a fan of. So there's all these kinds of people being involved that made it seem like it would just be a heck of an opportunity.

"Then I read the script and I dug the politics of it, and I thought it made a lot of sense in terms of where the world is headed and where we're trending, as they say in the arms business, with technology and all this shit. Military and law enforcement and now even f**king Amazon is relying more and more on this technology. It kind of made sense. All these factors combined. It was just like, 'Yeah, man, this could be a wicked click.'"

SFX: Your character wasn't in the original. He's apparently a marketing executive. Is his presence alone indicative of the film's new satirical targets?

JB: "Indeed. I'm the head of marketing for OmniCorp, and most of my scenes are with Michael Keaton and Jennifer Ehle. She plays the head of the legal department and he plays the CEO of the company. You really get into this sort of ardently capitalist component of an amoral business place. We take the audience into the offices of some pretty morally bankrupt, shitty people. Selfishly, as an actor, it's very fun to play someone that crappy. Like I said, this movie has a great deal of politics in it, and we're definitely saying some shit. My character definitely represents those people."

SFX: José Padilha mentioned to us that Michael Keaton's character, Sellars, isn't necessarily evil, that he just takes the wrong path. Is it safe to say your character is the most unapologetically wicked in the film?

JB: "[Laughs.] I don't want to make big proclamations, but I'll definitely say my guy, Pope, he doesn't really give a shit

// "I ALWAYS LIKED *ROBOCOP* 2 BECAUSE CAIN WAS JUST THE BEST BAD GUY"

// "IT MAKES A LOT OF SENSE IN TERMS OF WHERE THE WORLD IS HEADED..."



■ ABOVE: SMART SUITED AND CYNICAL "LABEL WHORE" POPE AT WORK.

about anything but the quarterly reports. He's an aggressive market capitalist and everything that entails. He's also a real label whore, so I'm dressed quite ridiculously. But Pope has no shame whatsoever about what he believes and what he thinks about how the world is supposed to work."

SFX: Would the closest analogue in the original film be Miguel Ferrer's character, Bob Morton?

JB: "Exactly right. Yeah."

SFX: Did you get involved in any of the action sequences?

JB: "Oh yeah. Without giving too much away I was present for a lot of it, one certain important moment in particular. You might have picked up on the through line of all my comments, that I was basically just a fanboy who was lucky enough to get to be there. From working with my heroes to just... The movie magic shit is never lost on me. So when I show up on a set like this one I get to gawk at the production design and the weaponry and the costumes and all this

sort of stuff. It was just so f**king cool. And also, action and horror and sci-fi, that's my jam. So any time I get to be on stuff where people are firing guns, it's a good day for me; and I got to see a lot of that shit. And it's super cool to get to see people who are so good at what they do doing something as neat as modifying RoboCop's suit in real life."

SFX: Was there any one scene in the film that you think will have a particularly strong impact on long-time *RoboCop* fans?

JB: "Definitely. I don't know what I'm allowed to say and what I'm not allowed to say, but I'll just say there's some pretty classic shit in this. And the movie breaks some cool new ground. If you're going to watch an action movie, you will not be disappointed whatsoever."

SFX: The original was a hard R, with over-the-top violence. This one takes a different approach with its PG-13 rating. Does this film tend to be more action focused than gore focused?

JB: "That's probably right. Also – I keep

going back to the politics – there's a lot of just talking in this movie. Don't get me wrong, it's an action movie, and people will – pardon my language – get their f**cking rocks off. Let there be no doubt. In this one there's definitely more action versus gore. But it gets its points across in a big way. Yes, it's less gory, but it's probably got more action than the first one, and it's very honest and open with its politics."

SFX: You mentioned *RoboCop 2*, which has a strong cult following, but is perhaps more flawed than the original. So on a certain level would you rather see that film remade? Since it's one of those great flawed films that one can imagine being remade into something perfect.

JB: "A hundred percent. Yeah. Well, yes and no. Part of me does, and part of me wonders. Because to me *RoboCop 2* is even more over-the-top and punk rock than the first one. It comes from a more weird, manic, dark, aggressive place and it's super Frank Miller. That's one that... Teeth doesn't even begin to describe it – it's got f**king fangs. If they were able to keep it as mean as *RoboCop 2* is – that's a f**king mean movie – then for sure. Because like you said, it's got some flaws in it. Some of which could be remedied right now. There's some stuff that doesn't look awesome in it. But yeah, as long as it was as f**king mean as it was then, for sure."

SFX: What's next for you? Any additional genre projects?

JB: "Indeed, yes. My writing partner and I, we've adapted this graphic novel called *Random Acts Of Violence*, which is kind of a f**ked up slasher film/weird art piece. Hopefully we'll go into production on that sometime in the next year or so, maybe in a year and a half. We're really excited about it. It's mean and super compelling, and gory. It's a straight-ahead horror flick. There's no other genre it could belong to, so we're really excited about that."

"We also wrote a first draft for the sequel to our movie *Goon*. Hopefully we'll get that going sooner rather than later. Then *How To Train Your Dragon 2* is coming out. I'm pretty excited to show the world that, because that movie is going to be quite spectacular."

SFX: Thank you for your time, Jay.

JB: "Likewise, bud!"

// "THERE'S LESS GORE, BUT IT'S PROBABLY GOT MORE ACTION IN IT THAN THE FIRST"

■ BELOW: MURPHY'S REALLY ANNOYED. HE CAN'T FIND HIS OTHER GLOVE. YOU SEEN IT?

■ BOTTOM: EDDIE FOR ACTION - ROBO COMES UP AGAINST A DANGEROUS DROID.





JACKIE EARLE HALEY

- **ROLE:** MATTOX
- JACKIE EARLE HALEY PLAYS THE MAN WHO'S CHARGED WITH SHOWING ROBOCOP THE ROPES - IS HE UP TO THE TASK? ROB POWER FINDS OUT...



BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Actor

BORN: 14 July 1961

FROM: California

GREATEST HITS: *Watchmen*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, *Lincoln*, *Dark Shadows*, *Human Target*

RANDOM FACT: Haley says he discovered the joys of reading late – in his mid teens – and the first book he ever read was *The Mote in God's Eye* by sci-fi icon, Larry Niven.



IMAGES: HILLARY FOX/ISTOCK; COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES INC.

Would you fancy putting RoboCop through his paces? Didn't think so. No, this is a job for a man with no fear, a man with military experience, tactical nous and balls of solid rock. In the new RoboCop, that man is Rick Mattox, a new character, not in the original movie, played by Jackie Earle Haley.

Haley is probably best known in genre circles for playing Rorschach in *Watchmen* and Freddy Krueger in the remake of *A Nightmare On Elm Street*. Either way, he's a man who knows how things are done on the dark side, and it's a quality that suits Mattox, a man who deals in "shades of grey", according to Haley. Don't expect a warm, nourishing, Mr Miyagi/Daniel style relationship here. There's friction between RoboCop and Mattox, and where there's friction, sooner or later there's usually fire...

SFX: Who is Rick Mattox and what is his background?

Jackie Earle Haley: "Mattox has a military background. Now he's a robot handler for OmniCorp, overseeing robotic police peacekeeping missions in cities all over the world. As a result of this, crime is way down."

SFX: Mattox is a military strategy specialist and the man charged with getting RoboCop ready for the streets. But the relationship between man and machine isn't an easy one, is it?

JEH: "There's definitely tension there. Mattox is really putting RoboCop through his paces, and Mattox doesn't really dig the guy. Mattox is there to make sure that there isn't too much man getting in the way of the machine doing its job properly. So there's friction, but they all work together to a degree."

"Mattox is reluctantly training RoboCop. He feels that introducing organics into the system is a mistake. He knows exactly what his robots are going to do with any given situation without hesitation and this reduces risk. Another layer of processing, especially human, creates hesitation and Mattox feels this increases risks. So he's not really enjoying this experiment that is RoboCop."

SFX: Is he a "company man" or does he have his own agenda?

JEH: "Mattox is totally a company man."

SFX: What was it like working with the film's director, José Padilha?

JEH: "José is an awesome director. He totally knows what he's doing, and it

was a great experience working with him. He's a very thoughtful, and super intelligent guy. His rehearsal process was amazing. With his editor, Daniel, and his writer, Josh, he would take each actor and focus on their scene progression though out the script. He would make little tweaks, and changes making the characters better while removing logical problems. It was a great process, and the script really got better."

SFX: Is it a relief this time not to be the man spending the most time in costume and make-up?

JEH: "It was nice to not have to wear a mask. You know, with Joel Kinnaman, who plays this version of RoboCop, the best thing about the suit is that it has a visor that can come up and down. It's a very ominous look that the designers have found, but a very compelling one."

SFX: How do you think Joel coped in the role of RoboCop?

JEH: "You know when I first signed on to do this, I heard Joel was doing RoboCop, and I thought it was great news. I had just become a fan of his – prior to that – from watching *The Killing*. It's a really good show, and he's my favourite guy in it. I just thought that he was perfect for the role of Alex Murphy and RoboCop."

"He was awesome. He's great to hang out with, a nice guy, very talented. The stuff I've seen just looks great, and I think he's going to be a great RoboCop. I just think he's cast perfectly."

SFX: So what advice would the man who put so much energy and subtle menace into the masked Rorschach give to the latest actor to play RoboCop?

JEH: "One of the things I can recall from when I was playing Rorschach is that every scene, I'd be going back to the monitor to see it played back to see how I came across. You've got to use your whole body."

SFX: What's the best thing about the new *RoboCop* movie?

JEH: "This is just a great script with a really brilliant director. The script I read, the film I witnessed being shot, it's just awesome. It retains some of the satirical edge of the original, but this time addressing issues such as human rights and drone warfare."

SFX: What do you think of the new RoboCop suit in action? There has been some grumbling from fans, but then that's what fans do.

JEH: "It's very intimidating and visually I think the designers have really done well ➤"



// "THIS IS JUST A GREAT SCRIPT WITH A BRILLIANT DIRECTOR. IT'S JUST AWESOME"



with it. You know, I think they're going to love it. What we're doing now compared to 1987, there's a huge difference in with what you can do on film."

SFX: But it's not that's reliant on CG, though, is it?

JEH: "There's a lot of action in the film, a lot of running around getting shot at. It was a lot of fun to make, and it was a very collaborative experience. It's not like we shot everything to green screen, but there's a lot of effects that will be added in afterwards. There's a lot of robots and whatever else. It's going to be awesome."

"On set everyone was very focused. It was quite fraught at times, but only because José was very keen to get it right and was aware of the pressure."

SFX: You've appeared in a lot of science fiction and fantasy films, but is it a genre you personally enjoy?

// "I LOVE CONS. IT'S A KICK TO SEE ALL THE PASSION PEOPLE HAVE"

JEH: "Oh yeah, absolutely, I'm kind of a fan of almost every genre but sci-fi, yeah. I read the big three: Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and Arthur C Clark. I love sci-fi cons. When we're promoting something, it's quite a kick. It's wonderful to see all of the passion and the love that people have for their favourite films and their favourite genres and such. To be part of that, to witness it, just to see all the people in their costumes, it's really something."

SFX: Were you a comics fan when you were a kid?

JEH: "Not, really. It took a while – until I had to read *Watchmen*, to be honest. As a kid I had friends who loved them but I had a problem with them. I loved the pictures, but I've always been a slow reader so I had a difficulty with the pace. I'd get a few pictures ahead and lose where I was and have to go back. So I didn't get into them. But reading *Watchmen* was a complete eye-opener. Of course, I was much older, but I soon got the pace with that and it really turned me into a geek."

SFX: Without giving any spoilers (such as, does Mattox get killed?) would you like to appear in a sequel?

JEH: "Yeah, it would be awesome to be in a sequel." ●

■ BELOW:
IF YOU'RE
WORRIED
THAT THE
FILM IS GOING
TO BE LOW
ON ACTION,
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JOSE PADILHA

- **ROLE:** ROBO-REBOOTER
- **WHEN DARREN ARONOFSKY DROPPED OUT OF THE ROBOCOP REBOOT, THE LAUDED BRAZILLIAN DIRECTOR TOOK THE HOT SEAT. JOSEPH MCCABE FINDS OUT WHY...**



BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Film Director

BORN: 1 August 1967

FROM: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

GREATEST HITS: *Bus 174*, *Elite Squad*, *Garapa*, *Elite Squad: The Enemy Within*, *Secrets Of The Tribe*

RANDOM FACT: Like *RoboCop*, Padilha's *Elite Squad* films look at the media and police violence through the lens of a fictional thriller.

Director José Padilha is, by Hollywood standards, a walking contradiction. Fast-talking but thoughtful, enthusiastic but wise, he's directed both award-winning feature films and documentary exposés. He's also a lifelong science fiction fanboy who, as he demonstrated in his 2010 breakthrough smash *Elite Squad* (Brazil's highest-grossing film of all time), is unafraid of depicting shocking violence on screen if it serves a greater purpose. The filmmaker speaks with *SFX* about rebooting a science fiction classic.

SFX: What makes *RoboCop* so ripe for reinterpretation in 2014?

José Padilha: “*RoboCop* is an iconic movie, a classic really. Very bold, aesthetically, in its use of violence. But I think first and foremost it created a character that encapsulates an idea that I think is really sophisticated. You might watch the movie and not get it, but it's there. The idea is that there is a connection between the automation of violence, law enforcement and war – and fascism. That, to me, is the heart and soul of the original *RoboCop*. When I watch it, that's what I think about.

“It's a connection that's easy to see if you look at history. Take Vietnam, for instance. Why did America pull out of Vietnam? Because soldiers were dying and there was pressure at home to stop the war. Why did Americans and British troops pull out of Iraq? For the same reason. If you replace soldiers with drones and robots, where's the pressure? Gone. The same thing goes for law enforcement. If you have real live policemen, you cannot ask them to do anything you want, because people will react. But once you take away the policemen and you put in robots, who is going to stop you from doing whatever you want if you're law enforcement or if you are a fascist state?

“The movie that we decided to make embraces this concept; this thing that we should be wary about. We should look at the way technology is automating violence in a very careful way, because it could open the door to fascism.”

SFX: How do you show this in the film?

JP: “We create a future that's very close to 2013 in which America, England, China, the big powers, are using drones for warfare automatically; autonomous robots for warfare. Each country has its own legislation about whether this is allowed domestically or not. And in America, it's forbidden. So in our movie we have this

IMAGES: SUMMERSET/RETRIEVERS/ISTOCK, COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES INC.

corporation that builds these machines, these robots, sells them to the military-industrial complex, makes a lot of money, but cannot sell domestically. So they're losing a lot of money.

"The owner of one of those companies, Raymond Sellars (Michael Keaton), wants to sell robots in America for law enforcement. He can't, and he has an idea: if the law in America demands that only feeling entities – human beings – can pull the trigger, let's put a man inside the machine. Then we can sell our machine. And if the machine becomes so efficient and so good and brings the crime rate down so much, we can then build from it and start changing the law. So it's a fight for this law. We don't realise this, but when you automate violence, everything changes.

"For instance, let's say, for example, a policeman is in Rio de Janeiro and he kills a kid by mistake. You can arrest this policeman, you can try him, you can judge him, you can punish him – and society does that often, everywhere. But say it's a robot instead. The robot goes there, makes a mistake, kills a kid. It makes no sense to arrest the robot. It makes no sense to punish the robot. Who is accountable then? In our movie, the Americans have decided, 'No drones. You have to be conscious to pull the trigger.' So Raymond Sellars, who wants to sell drones, says, 'Let's put a man inside a machine.' Which seems to be a simple premise, but it entails a lot of things."

SFX: Did that entail making conceptual changes to the character of RoboCop?

JP: "For starters, Alex Murphy has to be a conscious RoboCop. He has to be a real person inside the body of a robot, so people can feel that he's making his own decisions. In our movie, contrary to the first one, we don't have dead Alex Murphy inside a robot. We have live Alex Murphy. So one day this guy wakes up, and he's a robot. That's terrible and frightening, because he has a wife and a kid. And he can't have sex anymore, he can't touch his kid, his life has been stripped away from him. He has to be docked into medical devices so that his blood is cleaned of viruses and bacteria, because he doesn't have any immune system. He has to be fed. It's a nightmare ➤

// "MURPHY HAS TO BE A CONSCIOUS *ROBOCOP*. HE HAS TO BE A PERSON INSIDE THE ROBOT"

// "WE SHOULD LOOK AT THE WAY THAT TECH IS AUTOMATING VIOLENCE"



■ ABOVE: DIRECTOR JOSE PADILHA AT WORK (AND ROCKING A NATTY STEVE ZISSOU HAT).

// "WE DID A LOT OF AUDITIONS WITH A LOT OF ACTORS. JOEL JUST NAILED IT"



I want drones in the army,' and so on. It's fascinating to me, because all of this comes from one simple thing: looking at Verhoeven's film and understanding what the premise is."

SFX: What did you see in Joel Kinnaman?

JP: "First off we needed a great actor, because the guy has to play all of this that I just described, the relationships in the film, with his right hand and his face. That's it. That's what he has left as RoboCop. So you have to be pretty good. We did a lot of auditions with a lot of actors. Over and over again. Joel came over and just nailed it. I don't know if it's because he's Swedish and Swedish people are really into these existential dramas [Laughs]. But whatever it is, he had it. He's pretty charismatic too, and he can do a cop, as we saw in *The Killing*, and action scenes and so on. He was great for the role, and he wasn't someone that people would recognise instantly. Because we didn't want to do a 'star' playing RoboCop – we wanted to do RoboCop. Once you have a very famous movie star do a character like this, you put another layer on the film. Let's say the name of the actor is X. Then it becomes, 'X is RoboCop' instead of, 'It's RoboCop'."

SFX: How do you translate the ironic humour of the original *RoboCop*? Because with today's big budget films sold in an increasingly global market, humour is often the first thing that's thrown out.

JP: "To tell you the truth, I never thought about that. I just made the humour work for me. The challenge with the irony nowadays... I bet you that some part of the audience will look at the Samuel L Jackson character and not think it's ironic. You know what I mean? They exist. So I actually like that kind of irony, an irony that some people get and other people don't. It's a cool thing. I'm curious to see what's going to be the reaction to the Samuel Jackson character and how he relates to the movie. And how people will relate to his politics. I'm curious to see if people will actually embrace it. There will be people who will embrace it. 'Yes, we need those robots for law enforcement. Because robots are not corruptible, robots don't have bias, robots don't get tired. Let's have the robots!'"

SFX: When did you first see the Paul Verhoeven *RoboCop*?

JP: "Well, *RoboCop* I saw when it was released. It was like a frenzy for a kid. First of all because it's R-rated. A hard R. So you really wanted to see it. [Laughs.] It was an event watching *RoboCop* at that time. Because there was nothing that could compare to it. There wasn't any movie like that. Even in the '80s, when everything was already extrapolated and exaggerated – *RoboCop* was even more so."

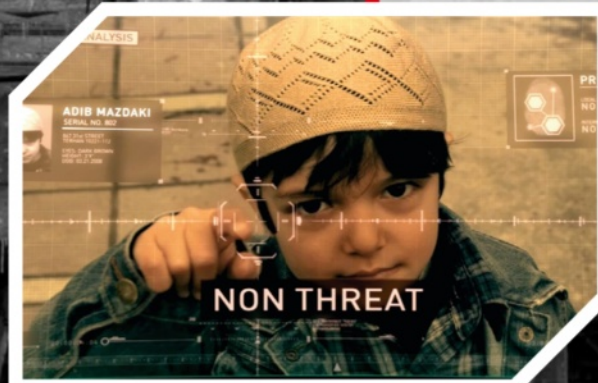
being RoboCop! Once you get that political premise and you throw it into this character, you create an amazingly dramatic character. 'How do I live with that? How does my family adapt to it? Furthermore, I'm being used by a corporation to advance an agenda.'

"And not only the corporation. Our movie makes a lot of satire with the crazy right-wing, far-fetched American part of the media. So we have Samuel L Jackson's character, who changes the meaning of everything that happens on screen to advance his agenda. Which is 'Kill Obamacare!' [Laughs.] I'm kidding. Which is, 'I want drones in the streets.

■ **BELOW:** NON THREAT? ARE YOU SURE? HE MIGHT POKE YOU IN THE EYE

■ **MIDDLE:** IN THE NEW FILM ROBOCOP IS CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET.

■ **BOTTOM:** AND HE DOESN'T APPROVE OF THAT SELFIE YOU JUST TWEETED.



"And it was smart. I could tell it was a smart movie right from the get go. It's about automation of violence and fascism. It's really interesting. And the scene where ED-209 kills the lawyer in the meeting is just f**king great. It's just fun.

"*RoboCop 2*? I thought it was okay – I pretend they never made it! *RoboCop 3* I hated. He flies and stuff. It's really *RoboCop 1* for me. That's the one. That's the great movie. I loved it. When I saw it I wasn't a filmmaker, I was a kid. But when I started movies, I never thought I was gonna have a go at *RoboCop*. I made movies out of Brazil. I made independent movies, documentaries about social issues; and my movies would go to Sundance, to Berlin. That's how I operated as a filmmaker, and I still do."

SFX: How did you win the role of director of *RoboCop*?

JP: "They didn't offer *RoboCop* to me. I went to talk about other stuff, and there was a *RoboCop* poster in the room, and I said, 'Are you guys doing that?' 'Oh, we have the rights. Aronofsky just dropped out of the project.' 'Can I do it?'"

"That's how it was. It was on a whim. Because I saw that poster and I saw the original *RoboCop* and I loved it. I was sitting in the room and said, 'I want to do that!' It was a coincidence really. Because I didn't know that there was gonna be talk about *RoboCop* in this meeting – I just saw something that I really loved and that I thought was current, and I asked for it and I got it. Be careful what you wish for, as they say [Laughs]."

SFX: Gary Oldman said you were concerned about remaking *RoboCop* because it's a flawless film. But it sounds like the opportunity to comment on new social issues won you over.

JP: "I think it's ironic in itself that in the '80s we were making satires about paid ads, and now we're making satires about the media itself. That's already ironic – what was bad in the paid-for ads is now bad in the TV shows themselves. TV commentators should be telling you things that are true, not things that they're being paid to say! So that's already quite ironic. That's like, 'Wait a second – we went from here to there?'"

"When you're making something like this you have to have a sense of respect. But at the same time you can't be afraid of it. If you are afraid of it you're not gonna make it. And you can't try to remake it. It's impossible to remake *RoboCop*. So what I did was I looked at what I thought was distinctively important for me about the original. I saw in it a critique of the automation of violence and fascism. I thought the dehumanisation of law enforcement, of soldiers was a really serious thing. And it is right now. You open *The*

New York Times and you read about it. So I wanted to make a movie of that, and that's what I did. I didn't stop to be concerned about the original *RoboCop*. Once I decided to do it, I just went ahead and did my own take on it. Because there's really no other way of doing it. I hope it works."

SFX: The suit is perhaps the most iconic piece of *RoboCop* imagery. What went into the redesign?

JP: "We have more than one suit..."

SFX: You start with the traditional colour and then it becomes black?

JP: "Then it changes again. I don't want to spoil the movie, but it changes yet again... The thing is, it's a comment on corporations. The moment that this corporation decides to put a man inside the machine and sell this machine for law enforcement, this man is somewhat of a problem. Products nowadays – like a Coca-Cola bottle – are designed through a marketing process in which they try different shapes, they do focus groups,

// "WHEN YOU MAKE SOMETHING LIKE THIS YOU HAVE TO HAVE RESPECT, BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU CAN'T BE AFRAID OF IT"

and see how people react to them. That process, when it's applied to human beings, is really dehumanising. And what's more dehumanising, for someone who is a robot, than to have a marketing department changing your colour all the time to see what works best for the public [Laughs]. That's kind of what we went for, so it's a critique of corporations really. It's not really, 'Let's make it black because it's cool.' It's really more of a joke than anything else. Having said that, it's really well designed and it looks cool, and it's slick. It's a different take on it, but it's gonna change. It's not gonna be like that all the way. You'll have to watch the movie."

SFX: Can you talk about the visor?

JP: "Yeah, we cut to *RoboCop*'s POV several times. *RoboCop* in our movie is connected to the internet, and to every single CCTV camera in the city. So in this film he sees every f**king thing. And we need to see what he sees. So sometimes *RoboCop* is here and there's a crime going on across town, and he can see it while he's talking to you here. The software detects the crime

and shows the image. The way he sees and the way we cut to the POV, it has to be clear that we're cutting to the POV graphically. The POV has a tone and a colour and a design that has to be improvised. So when we cut to his vision, it's actually a little bit of a cropped, twisted image with a little red that you see. So there's actually a connection between his suit and his visor and how we cut to his POV and what he sees in these POV's."

SFX: Did you grow up a genre fan?

JP: "Yeah, I love sci-fi. I think I read every single Isaac Asimov and Arthur C Clarke book there is to read, and also Ray Bradbury. A lot of Ray Bradbury. *The Martian Chronicles*, I love all of that. I love science and I love sci-fi. But my favorite is Asimov. A little bit of a crime was committed with *I, Robot*. I don't like that movie at all."

SFX: Did Asimov's work influence you as you made this film?

JP: "Well, I always liked robots, and if you read Asimov, the very existence of the laws is already an acknowledgement of the danger of machines. They're really smart. You have to constrain them. That's what the laws do, right? 'A robot shall not harm a human being. A robot shall obey the orders of human beings. And a robot shall not let itself be harmed.' So yeah, my interest in robots and in science, really, comes from Asimov. I mean Asimov also wrote about science. He has great books that are not fiction at all. *The Neutrino* is a fantastic book. He even has a textbook in physics. I'm a fan of Asimov. He influenced a lot of things I do. He's a great storyteller. You just can't stop reading him. *Foundation* is genius. The first, second and third – I really love them. The other ones are not as cool because he starts adding stuff. But the originals are great."

SFX: What can you say about this cast and the genre iconography it brings?

JP: "It's one of the reasons why I gravitated towards them. The Michael Keaton *Batman* is just amazing. I love the Michael Keaton *Batman*. Michael had a very interesting take on his character in *RoboCop* because he didn't see him as being evil, and he wasn't actually. We don't have a bad guy in this new *RoboCop*. We have a very smart guy who does something that gets out of hand. We have a street gang, but we don't have a bad guy on OCP. If something goes wrong, corporations go wrong when they cover their tracks. But we do have a street villain and all of that. Michael, Samuel L Jackson and Gary Oldman are actors that really played very strong roles in the '80s and '90s, and are very important to the filmography that I grew up with. It's one of the reasons I went for them."

■ **RIGHT:** AT LEAST ROBO GETS A SNAZZY MOTORBIKE IN THE NEW FILM.

■ **FAR RIGHT:** EXPECT LESS GORE BUT MORE ACTION IN THE NEW MOVIE.

■ **BELOW:** THINGS AREN'T LOOKING TOO GREAT FOR MURPHY RIGHT ABOUT NOW.





MARTIN WHIST

- **ROLE:** CREATING THE LOOK OF *ROBOCOP*'S FUTURE
- **REDESIGNING *ROBOCOP* FOR THE DIGITAL AGE WAS NO EASY TASK, BUT THE NEW FILM'S PRODUCTION DESIGNER, MARTIN WHIST, TELLS MATT BIELBY THAT GOOD BUSINESS IS WHERE YOU FIND IT**



IMAGE COURTESY OF MARTIN WHIST.

BIODATA

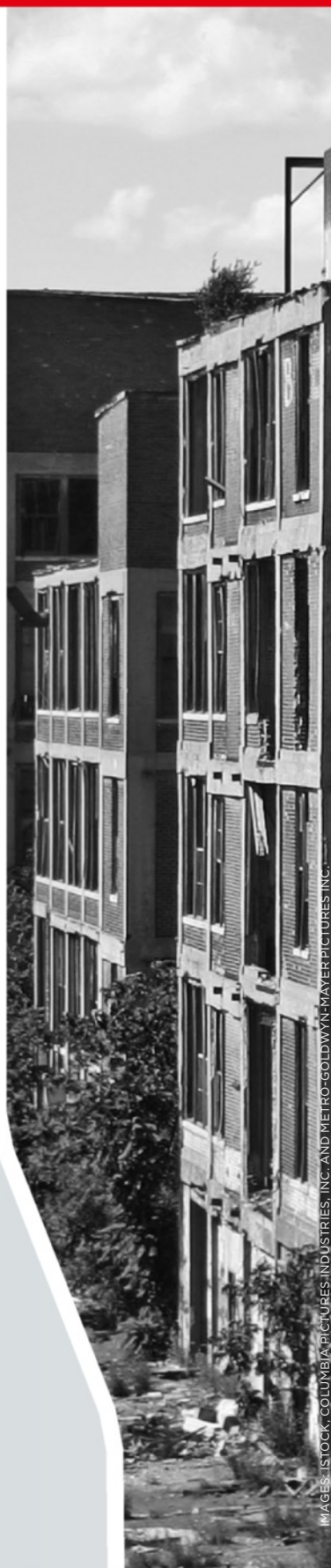
OCCUPATION: Production designer

BORN: 25 November 1979

FROM: Canada

GREATEST HITS: *The Cabin In The Woods*, *Super-8*, *Warm Bodies*, *Cloverfield*, *Devil*, *Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Adventures*

RANDOM FACT: Next up, Whist is working on *Night At The Museum 3*. "It's a very different sort of film," he says, "but just as challenging in its own way."



IMAGES: ISTOCK, COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-PICTURES, INC.

The original RoboCop suit was a masterpiece of movie production design, as intimidating a chunk of heavy metal as ever rolled off the production lines of "old Detroit", and – crucially – one of the few bits of cyborg design that shouts, "Hang on, wait up there: this isn't fun. Don't be so eager to surrender your soft, squishy bits in favour of cold, strong, unforgiving metal!" In *RoboCop*, being a cyborg looked hard – nightmarish, even – and definitely not something to be envied in the manner of a wall-leaping Steve Austin or an elastic-armed Inspector Gadget.

On remaking *RoboCop*, then, the Prime Directive surely isn't "Protect The Innocent" or "Uphold The Law" but, rather, "Don't Mess It Up". There's a lot of love for the solid, robotic original, and some fans have already cried foul at the sleeker, more superheroic version offered up by the new 2014 film – especially in his black "stealth" incarnation. The original, 1987 version of RoboCop was built by celebrated make-up effects man Rob Bottin – then fresh from the likes of *Legend* and John Carpenter's *The Thing*, and with *Total Recall* in his immediate future – and his million-dollar budget made the reborn Officer Alex Murphy easily the most expensive single element in the whole production.

For the remake, production designer Martin Whist is the man in the driver's seat, and no slouch himself, with the likes of *Super 8*, *The Cabin In The Woods* and *Cloverfield* already on his CV. His first task, naturally, was to find a way to pull this production out from under the shadow of the first film, while at the same time paying homage to it.

SFX: The original movie is old, and was made quite cheaply – it cost \$13 million in 1987, about the same as the *Nightmare On Elm Street* sequel released around the same time – but it made a huge impact. Did this give you pause when starting on the new version?

Martin Whist: "First off, I have to say that, for the overall look of the thing, we absolutely wanted to use as much from the original film as possible. Why wouldn't we? It's so iconic. The trick is to resist the temptation to reinvent elements that already work, while at the same time coming up with a version that makes sense today – with what we know, with current technology, and with what our idea of the near future looks like now. Though there were challenges in creating a new RoboCop himself, the bigger thing for me was creating a realistic futuristic environment,

one that looked functional, and like it might actually happen. We especially wanted to use as little CG as possible; of course, it's a useful tool, there are many things we can only do that way, but the original used those techniques sparingly, and there's a power to including practical effects that we didn't want to lose. This is, after all, meant to be the here and now – just bumped up a bit."

SFX: As with the original film, you seem to have fairly normal cars and buildings, and then all these robots walking around.

MW: "We certainly wanted the sort of immediacy that you get when it looks like this stuff is happening in only a few years' time, not some far distant future. It's about making the technology seem plausible but suitably sophisticated, and specifically it's about making RoboCop himself seem like something we might be able to create very shortly. We spent a lot of research time looking at cutting edge tech to work out exactly what our version of the character would look like – and specifically at developments in new materials. I got very excited about graphene – an incredibly light and strong carbon-based material you could describe as a one-atom-thick layer of graphite – and also about potential future developments in computer technology, and all the ways in which the interface between the human and the robotic or digital worlds might come together."

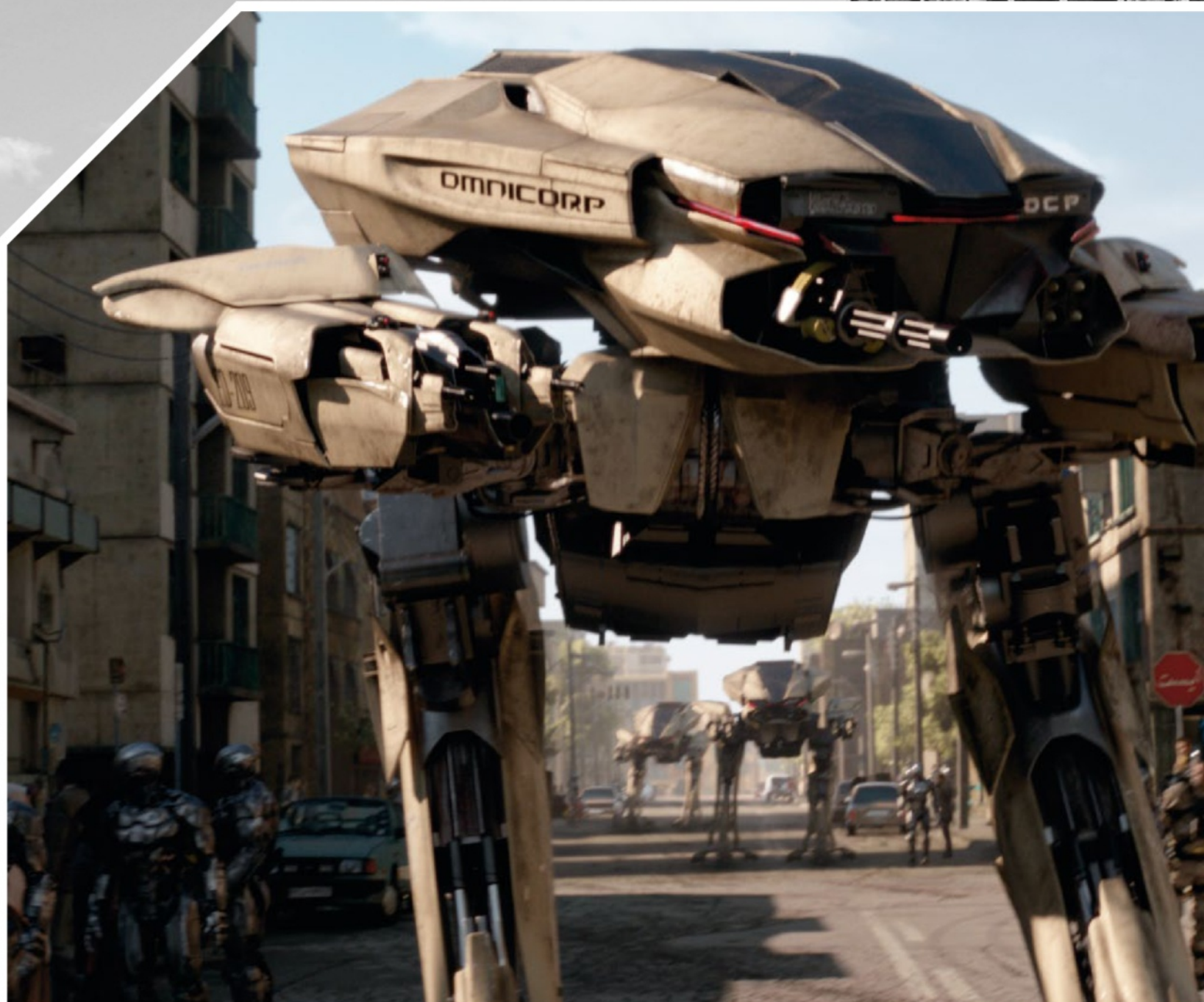
SFX: So is graphene specifically mentioned in the film, then?

MW: "No, it's not – but materials like that very much helped shape my research, and got us thinking about ways in which we could change things for this film. A material with those capabilities made us think specifically about the shape that RoboCop might be, for instance, and about the way he might move. Our RoboCop is specifically and deliberately lighter and faster moving than the original version, and that's because he's partially made of graphene or similar – though I doubt he's exclusively made out of it, as that would change the whole nature of the character. I was always aware that we couldn't go too far in that direction."

"We soon figured out that you need to nod to the original – and to the way

// "WE SPENT A LOT OF RESEARCH TIME LOOKING AT CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY"

// "OUR ROBOCOP MOVES MORE LIKE USAIN BOLT – STRONG, AGILE AND WITH GRACE"



■ ABOVE: IT'S A BIGGER BRUTE, BUT THE ED-209 IS STILL ALL BRAIN AND VERY LITTLE BRAIN.

// "ED-209
NEEDS TO FEEL
LIKE A REALLY
SERIOUS THREAT
THIS TIME"



SFX: Let's talk about RoboCop himself. Which bits were you keenest to keep?

MW: "Well, the basic shape of him, to start with. We kept the bipedal human form – we need to see that there's a man in there. The helmet and the visor and the chin guard are much the same, and the brushed-metal and black colour scheme – at least at first.

"The whole look is just somewhat sleeker, with a more organic feel; a little bit reptilian with all the panels and a more defined musculature. He still keeps his handgun in his thigh, although we've redesigned it, but now he has another mounted in his arm too. We've kept a lot of the detail around the shoulders and pecs, the various little grilles and ridges and other design cues; again, that's in the classically coloured version. The black one is different – we abandoned a lot of the detail and went with a smoother look, very military and tactical and Black Ops. This one was more influenced by stealth planes.

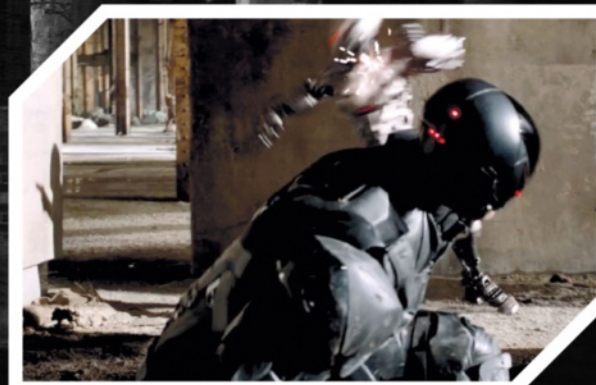
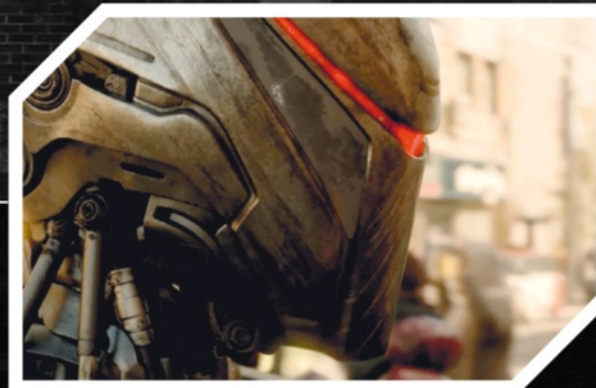
"The brilliant guys who physically made the suit were keen to have it as easy to get on and off as possible and, though the full thing still takes many hours, it's nowhere near as bad as it could have been. For some shots, the actor only really needed to wear part of the suit – like, if it's a head and shoulders thing we're doing, he doesn't need to put the entire thing on."

SFX: In the trailer we see him leaping about all over the place. The original RoboCop would never have done that.

MW: "Yes, the different way he moves is one of the first things anyone would notice about our RoboCop. Again, with the sort of materials we're now talking about, it makes no sense that he would move in that old, robotic way. His whole body type is different too, especially with the black version – we wanted to make him look as lean and powerful and athletic as possible, like a top Olympian, those amazing track-and-field guys like Usain Bolt. Our RoboCop moves more like they do – strong and agile and with grace. Like I say, we made sure there's something in there that reminds people of the old style of RoboCop movement, but it's very subtle.

"The other big difference, of course, is that for much of the original film Officer Murphy, as RoboCop, has lost his memory – he has no idea of who he used to be. In our film, the battle to regain his humanity remains key, but it's a different dynamic – he's never a zombie with no memory here, and at every stage he knows exactly what's happening to him. He's more human, in a way, than Murphy was in the original film – at least at the beginning."

SFX: What about the rest of the tech we see? In the original RoboCop, the cops all drove around in the then-new Ford Taurus, because that was considered the



■ BELOW: FEWER BOBBIES ON THE BEAT, MORE COPS IN THE CLOUDS.

■ MIDDLE: IT'S GOOGLE GLASS FOR ROBOTS.

■ BOTTOM: NOW'S NOT THE TIME TO SPOT AN UNTIED SHOELACE.

he moved so deliberately, and turned in 90-degree angles – at least a little, or it just wouldn't be RoboCop. The fact that he's heavy and robotic is part of what makes the character.

"To be honest, making things seem futuristic but not too futuristic is always a problem – you can't go too far with it, or all the everyday technology will start to look a bit old fashioned in comparison. One thing that's arguably better in our film is that both RoboCop and ED-209 don't seem quite so out-of-place futuristic as they did in the original film, surrounded as they were by all that '80s technology."

most futuristic-looking American car of the time.

MW: "It's extremely expensive to modify cars or build entirely new ones for films – and rarely totally convincing – so we do a little bit with cars on *RoboCop*, but it's not very extensive; we just made them a little sleeker and so on. And because we wanted our world to look like 'the day after tomorrow', we too use modern vehicles for most scenes.

"The film's again set in a near-future Detroit where crime is out of control, and we expanded on that a bit too – we've put some new buildings in the downtown area to modify the skyline and make it look that little bit more futuristic, and you'll spot bits of OmniCorp tech on the streets too.

"When you go inside the OmniCorp company itself, it mostly looks like modern-day corporate life, pretty standard, guys in suits and grey buildings – but we have fun there too. I particularly enjoyed designing the lab where they build RoboCop – it was one of my favourite things in the whole film, actually – and the smaller bits of technology, like making the computers look more advanced. We do a lot with screen technology here, both in OmniCorp HQ and elsewhere – you might get a screen on a tabletop or something. All these graphics and interfaces and handheld tech stuff is cool for our people to interact with, and it feels right, as it's the stuff that changes the fastest. If I went to your house 10 years ago, and then I went again today, it probably wouldn't look all that much different – except for the cool little bits of technology lying around."

SFX: There are plenty of flashier bits of tech here too, though – I'm particularly thinking of ED-209, such a hit in the original film.

MW: "Yes, we have some drone planes that we see a few times, and we have ED-209 – our version is yet bigger, more spiky, keeping the same classic shape, with the two legs and the big guns, but hopefully making him more dangerous looking. He needs to feel like a really serious threat to RoboCop this time. There's also ED-208, new for this film and a sort of intermediate version – just because we want to be loyal to the original doesn't mean we can't introduce new things. These ones are smaller, more humanoid, and they're totally robots – there's no man in there. They're

// "MURPHY'S MORE HUMAN, IN A WAY, THAN HE WAS IN THE ORIGINAL"

more of a drone soldier, designed for a different purpose to ED-209. They're still formidable, but not as much.

"The basic idea is that these are all OmniCorp-built military tech, used successfully overseas though no one will sanction their deployment on the streets of the US. But put a man inside some similar technology – as with RoboCop – and it's a whole new game. Suddenly OmniCorp can exploit the domestic peacekeeping market too."

SFX: And what else is new?

MW: "The extensive use of CCTV and other surveillance technologies, I guess; it's a much bigger part of our world than was ever considered at the time of the original film, and getting feeds from all the cameras around him is a big part of how RoboCop interacts with the world now.

"Instead of the police cruiser in the first film, our RoboCop travels around by motorcycle too. I'm pretty sure that was director José Padilha's idea, and we talked a lot about the design, kicking around all sorts of ideas: should he lie down backwards on it, for instance, or is it better to have him leaning forwards? The basic brief was to make it look cool and special without being too crazy – and to make it practical for a stuntman in the complete suit to ride. The bike actually has a longer wheelbase than a usual motorcycle, which makes it slightly harder to control when cornering, but the guys eventually did a good job with it."

SFX: How do you react when some fans take unkindly to the things you've changed, especially the black suit?

MW: "I actually talked to the guys who made the original suit very early on, and they gave me some great tips on ways we could construct it. For instance, although you don't really notice it on screen, there's a lot of colour in the original RoboCop suit – especially with the paint on the metallic portions, which actually has purples and other colours in there. It's a very clever paint job that reacts well to light, like the stuff you sometimes get on cars where the colour slips as the light hits it, so it goes from green to orange or something. It stops the metal from looking flat, and it's a trick that we stole for our version too.

"As for the black thing, it makes total sense in the film. After all, RoboCop is being marketed as a product in this fictional world, and the change in colour is part of that process. The OmniCorp thinking is, wouldn't he look more cool and aggressive – and so get kids, and the general public, liking him even more – if we painted him in a different way? And, of course, they do – because sleek and black like that simply looks so cool."



■ LEFT: NO ONE COULD DECIDE QUITE WHERE THE NEW TESCO SHOULD GO

■ FAR LEFT: HIS SHOULDER HURT BUT HE WAS DETERMINED NOT TO CRY.

■ BELOW: THE SILVER AND BLACK SUIT HAS A CLASSIC ROBOCOP VIBE





JOSHUA ZETUMER

- **ROLE:** WRITING THE REBOOT
- **ROBOCOP 2014'S SCRIPTER TELLS JOSEPH MCCABE THAT THIS ISN'T THE *CITIZEN KANE* OF ROBOT COP MOVIES, WHILE MAKING IT SOUND LIKE THE *CITIZEN KANE* OF ROBOT COP MOVIES.**



IMAGE: COURTESY OF JOSHUA ZETUMER

BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Screenwriter

FROM: San Diego

GREATEST HITS: *Quantum Of Solace*, *The Darkest Hour*, *Sherlock Holmes*

RANDOM FACT: Zetumer scripted a fourth entry in the Jason Bourne movie franchise before director Paul Greengrass and star Matt Damon left the project. The script was scrapped and the fourth film became *The Bourne Legacy*, starring Jeremy Renner.

Though *RoboCop* marks the first time Joshua Zetumer will be credited for his work onscreen, the screenwriter has earned a reputation as one of the most sought-after script doctors in Hollywood, having penned rewrites of tentpoles like *Quantum Of Solace* and Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*. Zetumer also has a couple of high-profile films currently in development, including his adaptation of Frank Herbert's *Dune* for director Pierre Morel, the spy thriller *Infiltrator*, and the psychological drama *Villain*. Here Zetumer chats with *SFX* about retooling Paul Verhoeven's classic for the 21st Century.

SFX: How do you present a fresh take on the original film's strong sense of irony?

JOSHUA ZETUMER: "I love the original movie, I think it's one of the seminal science fiction films of the '80s. As regards the tone of that movie, Verhoeven does such a unique thing on his own, and everyone sort of felt like there was no way to capture that tone, which felt very much like a satire of the Reagan era. Also the commentary he did on violence as entertainment is great for what it is. What we tried to do was incorporate the satire, which if you watch José Padilha's other films, he does in a slightly less arched way. He does a great deal of social commentary in his other films, and we wanted to continue commenting on the use of the media, while trying to pay our respects to the original movie. We weren't trying to duplicate it, because I don't think it's possible to try to make a Verhoeven-style movie, especially now. You've got a different filmmaker, I'm a different writer, the actors are all different, and you've got different audiences watching. So the satire is there but the tone is a little different. We were trying to pay respects to the original film, but not say, 'Let's just remake this movie, just because it's a good idea to remake this movie.' We tried to make a movie with a broad agenda and a lot on its mind, regarding politics, the media, and philosophy, in a landscape where you have many movies that are largely action spectacles. Getting to see this hopefully thoughtful movie made, I was really proud of that."

SFX: One of the elements that differs from the original is the presence of Murphy's wife and son, who are largely absent in the original. How does having them around change things?

JZ: "Yeah, we wanted to make a movie with a really strong emotional heart. It felt like the premise of this movie had a great

IMAGE: ISTOCK; COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. AND METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES INC.

built-in emotional arc for a character who's a family man. The idea that he would have a very strong relationship with his family before becoming RoboCop was fascinating to us. It feels like heart is kind of what's missing from a lot of big movies. It's very hard to create real character empathy in a two-hour window, to get you to really care about a relationship that quickly. Why do we love television characters so much? Because we're spending so much time with them. In *Breaking Bad*, we're spending 50 hours with Walter and Skyler. Before Alex Murphy becomes RoboCop we've got ten minutes to create an emotional connection. But as it turned out, when we started making the movie and it was Joel Kinnaman and Abbie Cornish, everyone on set was blown away. They did such a great job. All of the sudden we did a test screening and we got very high marks from women who came out of the movie saying, 'I really didn't think this movie was gonna be that emotional but it really got to me.' It sounds like I'm calling it the *Citizen Kane* of robot cop movies [laughs], but essentially we wanted to have a very strong emotional story at the core. And I do believe we've achieved that."

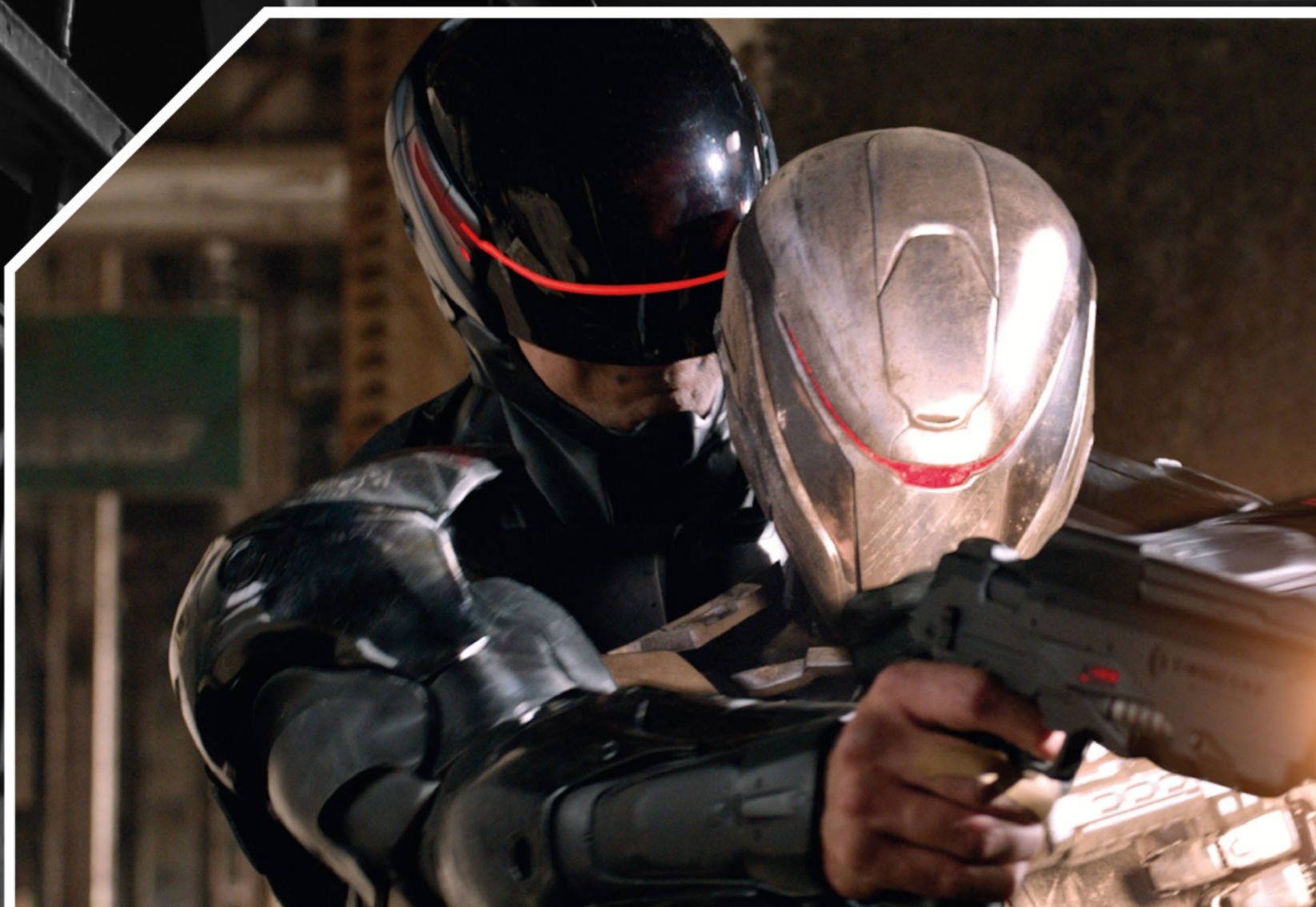
SFX: The other major difference is the film's approach to Murphy himself. In the original he's a machine regaining pieces of his humanity, now he's a man becoming increasingly machine-like.

JZ: "He's still very much a man. It felt like a stronger argument to have him be dehumanised more gradually and more subtly. It felt almost more devastating for the character, to be stripped of part of his humanity but still very much feel like a human being. I know in the original movie he feels very much like a machine – it's kind of funny the way he walks around stiffly. But with this one we're trying to create a more emotional story as well. On top of that, if he's more human it was easier for us to delve into philosophical questions regarding free will. I don't want to go into specifics on that, but having him stay human was always part of it. Not to mention the company that's building him wants to put their best foot forward PR-wise. So it's very important that he remain ➤

// "IT FELT LIKE THE MOVIE HAD A VERY STRONG BUILT-IN ARC FOR THE CHARACTER"



// "MURPHY IS STRIPPED OF HIS HUMANITY, BUT STILL FEELS LIKE A HUMAN BEING"



■ ABOVE: "GO ON, GIVE US A HUG," ROBOCOP WITH ONE OF HIS NEW METAL HEAD MATES.

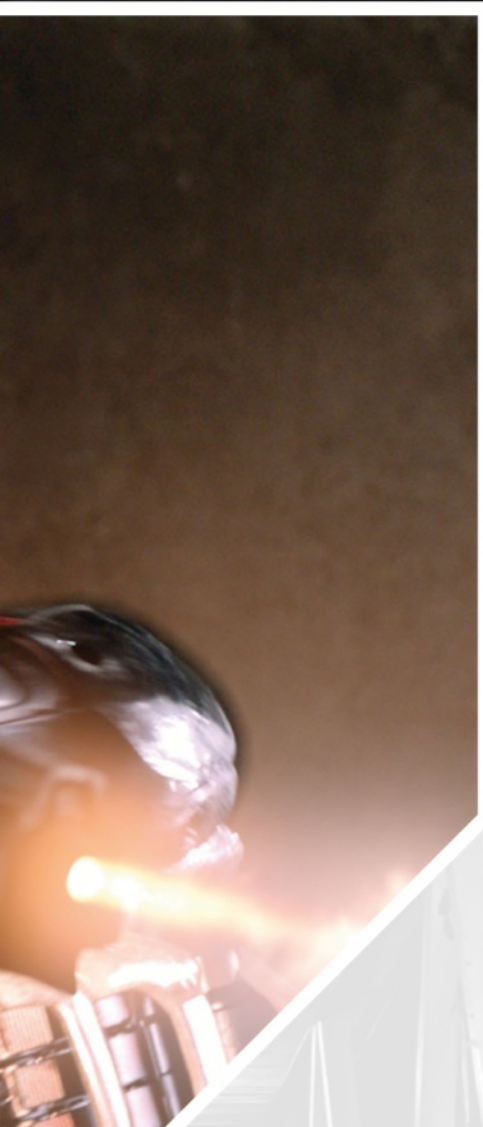
■ RIGHT: CUT TO THE CHASE. OMNICORP CARS GO ON THE PROWL IN DETROIT.



TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG

ZETUMER RECALLS THE FIRST TIME HE SAW THE ORIGINAL ROBOCOP... AND FAINTED

"When I saw the original movie, I was really young. I was too young to see it and I really wanted to see it. So my mom - who despite this story was a very good mom [laughs] - she took me to see it not thinking that it was R-rated, just thinking, 'Oh, it's a movie about a robot. It's for little kids!' So she took me to see it, and the violence was so intense that during the part where he jams the spike into somebody's neck and blood goes everywhere... it was so gruesome and I got so freaked out by it as a little kid that I ran out of the theatre, passed out, and fell down a flight of stairs. My mom didn't know what to do. She was like, 'Oh my God, we never should have come!' Which basically makes me a pussy. [Laughs.] But I've always had such a visceral reaction to movies."



■ ABOVE: "DAD, SOMETHING SEEMS DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU LATELY..."

a man for a number of reasons that will hopefully become more clear as you watch the movie."

SFX: What was it about your take on the material that won the studio over?

JZ: "I had seen the original *RoboCop* as a kid. I spoke to José and we originally connected on how we saw the movie. As a writer in Hollywood you're basically tasked with coming up with a take. It's like a little bit of a derby involving a lot of very talented, very skilled writers making the best presentation to the studio. I was really passionate about how I didn't want to do a remake that was a remake just because the movie needed to get made. I had a very specific take on what I wanted to do with it. The first movie was ahead of its time, but I wanted to do something completely different. It felt like the world had caught up to the world that was envisioned in the original *RoboCop*. José would always joke, 'We're not making a science-fiction

movie. In ten years this is going to be a documentary.' Because it's about politics that are happening right now. It's about technology that's right around the corner. It doesn't have the feel that the original movie had, where it was set in a distant future where there are roving criminal gangs and they're trying to get rid of old Detroit. The idea of taking a movie and setting it five minutes in the future... Not to mention when you do a remake like this, I feel like you're trying to be really faithful only as much as it works for the story that you want to tell.

"But ultimately you're trying to do something as different as the fans will allow. So that it feels like an original story that makes sense in today's world, but you're not completely robbing the movie of its identity. Taking *RoboCop* and slapping it on something that's set in a completely different landscape that bears no resemblance to the original movie, it just feels like you're doing it so you can put ➤

// "I SPOKE TO JOSÉ AND WE CONNECTED ON HOW WE SAW THE MOVIE"



■ ABOVE: ONE OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT ROBOCOP SUITS THAT MURPHY GETS TO MODEL IN THE NEW MOVIE

the name on it and cash in. Don't even call that *RoboCop*. The purpose of a remake is not to adapt another person's screenplay or work, it's about adapting a world."

SFX: Did you grow up a big fan of science fiction films?

JZ: "Oh hugely so. As a kid I obviously loved *Star Wars*. But the stuff that got me really into movies as a career was not big action movies specifically. It was more like the sort of quirky, character-driven stuff of the '90s, like the Coen brothers movies. I think by the time I'd watched *The Big Lebowski* for the thousandth time in college, I was like, 'I think I can do this for a career.'"

SFX: Was your work on this film's script complete before casting was done?

JZ: "No, I had written a screenplay, and then I had written a number of drafts with José. Then later on people were cast and I was brought back on the set specifically to work with them. The way that José works – which actors just love – is he lets the actors via roundtable make changes in the script, and lets them give their own voice to the dialogue. So you're sitting at a table with Gary Oldman talking about his dialogue. Movies are so hard to make; it feels like this kind of string of disappointments punctuated by these moments of extreme bliss. Getting to be

at a table with all of these people whose films I've seen and who I admire so much, I was stuttering, I was so happy.

"As a side note... You're trying to work on script problems on the fly while filming, and there was one sequence – I can't say exactly what it is – where we couldn't figure out the logistics of how one character could get out of a certain situation. So me and the editor, Danny Rezende – who is brilliant – we tried to figure it out. We said, 'Let's just go to the art department and talk to everyone there and look at all the pictures of the sets that they're currently building.' So we walked through the hall and by looking at one of the sets in particular we figured out how the scene would end up working. It was an amazing moment. As a writer you spend so much time alone with just your thoughts, the ability to go to a craftsman and get the answer to a creative puzzle was a terrific experience for me. I loved that part of it."

// "THERE'S NOT A WEAK LINK IN THE CAST. THEY ALL BROUGHT THEIR A-GAME TO THIS"

SFX: What kinds of tweaks were made to the characters once the cast had all got on board?

JZ: "Well, in speaking about Gary Oldman specifically, he can find the humanity in the dullest lines imaginable. He'll find a way to give it voice and life and rhythm. It's kind of unbelievable to watch. He's very much a less-is-more type of actor. So some of the stuff, if he can do it with a look, he would rather do it with a look. You can only really do that if you are a really f**king good actor. Our editor created a ranking system for people he thought were smart, calling them either genius, genius master, and genius master plus; and Gary Oldman was a genius master plus. [Laughs.]

"But there's not a weak link in the cast. Every one of the actors in the film was just so ridiculously great: Michael Keaton, Michael Kenneth Williams, Jackie Earle Haley... I could literally list everyone. They all brought their A-game to *RoboCop*."

SFX: Was there any discussion between you and José about where a possible sequel might go?

JZ: "I have no idea if José wants to do a sequel to this film or not. I know that if a movie makes a lot of money, then everyone wants to do a sequel. Especially on this level, that's the rule. [Laughs.]"

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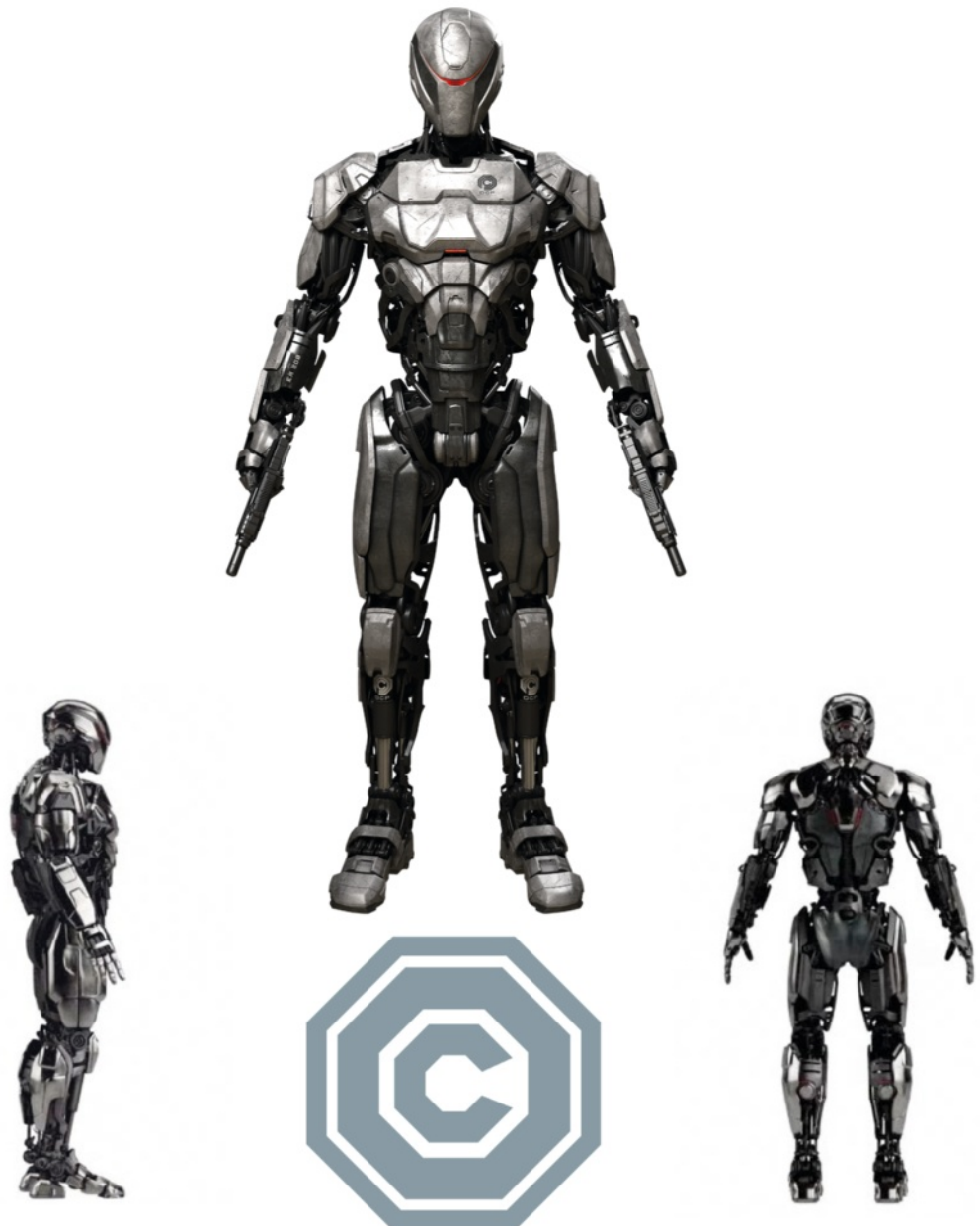


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PEDRO BROMFMAN

- ROLE: WRITING THE NEW SCORE
- THE MUSIC FOR THE NEW FILM WILL COMBINE BOTH ELECTRONIC AND ORCHESTRAL MUSIC AND NOD BACK TO THE ORIGINAL SCORE, THE FILM'S COMPOSER TELLS JOSEPH MCCABE



IMAGE: DANIELA SCARAMUZZA

BIODATA

OCCUPATION: Composer

BORN: 20 January 1976

FROM: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

GREATEST HITS: *Elite Squad*, *They Killed Sister Dorothy*, *March Of The Living*, *Elite Squad: The Enemy Within*, *Max Payne 3*

RANDOM FACT: Bromfman will next unite with *RoboCop* director José Padilha on the romantic drama anthology film *Rio, I Love You*, set in their home city of Rio de Janeiro.

Like his frequent collaborator, director José Padilha (for whom he scored the *Elite Squad* films), composer Pedro Bromfman marks his Hollywood feature film debut with the new *RoboCop*. A native of Brazil, Bromfman studied at UCLA before settling in Los Angeles, where he now provides music for commercials, video games, film and television. He's won gold medals for Excellence in Film Music at the Park City Film Music Festival, though he may be best known to genre fans as the composer for *Max Payne 3*. Bromfman chats with *SFX* from his LA studio, where his *RoboCop* score is in the final stages of editing.

SFX: You've worked on a diverse assortment of films with José. But nothing quite like this one...

Pedro Bromfman: "For sure. I've done video games before, but this is a different ball game, a film of this magnitude."

SFX: Is your approach the same?

PB: "It is pretty much the same approach, especially since I've worked with José before. But now we have access to a lot more things. If we wanted – which in this case we did – a whole orchestra, we went to London and recorded the orchestra over there. So we had 72 musicians playing the orchestral side of the score. The score also has a very heavy electronic and percussion side that was recorded beforehand. Then on top of that, we recorded a whole orchestra. So just the scope of the thing meant that whatever we wanted to bring into it was sort of available for us."

"But the process was very much the same. Of course this movie comes with a baggage and a history, so it's about determining what we wanted to bring back, what we didn't want to bring back, and what kind of sound we wanted for this. Since it is a big Hollywood film there's usually the expectancy of having big orchestral sound along with it, which was very exciting. Every time I have a chance to record an orchestra it just brings a different strength and power to a score."

SFX: Was it at all difficult for José to convince the studio to allow him to bring his own composer?

PB: "They wanted to meet me, and MGM wanted to have a meeting, and to hear what I had done before. I sent them a bunch of music. I think they hired José mostly for the *Elite Squad* films, and they loved the films. They were very excited about it and they were very interested in all the creative

IMAGE: TENNESSEEPHOTOGRAPHER/ISTOCK

voices that were part of those films. So it wasn't that hard to convince them. But they wanted to know who they were bringing in, and the fact that I was based here in LA already and doing things over here... Everything flowed very smoothly luckily."

SFX: Were you a *RoboCop* fan?

PB: "Yes. I remember when I first had dinner with José and he told me he had no idea what we were doing next, or at the time what he was doing next. But he was gonna try and get all of his team. Then when he told me it was *RoboCop*, I said, 'Really? Are you serious?' I remember I saw it in the theatre. I think I was 13 years old in Brazil, and it was certainly an impactful film. I think it was the first police action thriller I saw with a comedic side.

"Nowadays I see the film in a different way, of course. When I was 13 I probably didn't have the grasp that I have now as far as the political side and the satirical side and the social criticism that the film has. But I remember it had an impact as far as the violence portrayed in the film and the technology of the time. Yeah, the film has lived with me. I hadn't seen it for almost 18 years. I hadn't seen it until we started working on this one, and then I thought, 'I should go back and see it again.'

"But the score was always in the back of my mind. I had Basil Poledouris's original score, and I've always listened to it. That score is one of Poledouris's most well-regarded. But these days one doesn't hear that sort of grand melodic music in movies."

SFX: Film music has become far more incidental, you mean?

PB: "Absolutely right. Yeah, I think it's more about mood today. It's a time in film scoring where directors are staying away from the big thematic melodies. It sounds dated to most directors in the generation we're going through now, if you have these big thematic themes. It's just a transition we're going through, and we might go back to it. You don't really know.

"But there is that sense that film music now is more about mood and sound design and interesting sounds and tonalities, more than about big melodies. At first, of course, when you find out you're doing *RoboCop* you realise the film has this big score with fans all over the world. They're probably gonna go, 'Who is this guy?' Is it ever gonna be good enough? You don't know. But little by little when we started talking about it, I knew we had to come up with something new and interesting. It was my suggestion to incorporate maybe some of Basil's score in a couple of spots and trying to write spots to do it in for the fans who love it. But ➤



■ ABOVE: THE EM-209'S ARE OMNISCORP'S ALL-ROBOTIC DRONE POLICE FORCE. THEY MAKE GREAT TARGETS FOR ROBOCOP.

■ LEFT: THE C-1 POLICE BIKE IS A SWEET NEW RIDE FOR ROBOCOP TO USE OUT ON THE MEAN STREETS OF FUTURE DETROIT.

// "EVERY TIME YOU RECORD AN ORCHESTRA IT BRINGS A POWER TO A SCORE"

■ **RIGHT:** SAMUEL L. JACKSON BRINGS SOME STAR POWER TO THE FILM AND SOME RIGHT-WING FERVOUR TO THE ROLE OF TV HOST PAT NOVAK

■ **FAR RIGHT:** "UHP... I HOPE HE'S JUST HERE TO FIX THE COFFEE MACHINE." ROBOCOP SAYS HELLO TO HIS CO-WORKERS.



once we started working, it was basically creating something new and a different score, so it wasn't that. The idea of intimidation and having to live up to something went away pretty quickly."

SFX: How would you describe your score? Is it more traditional or contemporary?

PB: "We tried to mix a bit of both. RoboCop does have a new theme, and there are themes and melodies throughout the film. But it is a very modern score. So I did spend a lot of time working on the specific sounds and processing things. RoboCop is half-robot, half-human, so mixing a lot of the electronics with the orchestra and the live instruments, and being from Brazil and working with José before, we tend to like to use a lot of percussion. Not ethnic – there's nothing Brazilian that you hear in *RoboCop*. It's just that we use percussion for big action things. I think it's an interesting blend of tradition and the additional *RoboCop* melodies. The score's completely new, but we did try to give hints to people every once in a while that, 'This is *RoboCop*. The film that you loved is still here.'"

SFX: Do your musical inspirations vary from project to project or is there a core group of composers that inspires all of your work?

PB: "There certainly are people that have influenced me throughout my life. Growing up I didn't even know I was going to be doing film music. I grew up with mostly jazz and Brazilian music, which were very influential and tend to be music of high quality harmonically and melodically speaking. I also played in rock bands. But as far as film music, I remember when I first watched *Cinema Paradiso*, the Italian film. I was probably the same age when I first saw *RoboCop*. I think they came out around the same time. Ennio Morricone's score moved me so much.

"Some of the other influences... I love Jerry Goldsmith for his scores for *Alien* and *Planet Of The Apes*. He was a very particular composer, very different from anyone else you'd hear working with orchestras. And I love Thomas Newman (*The Shawshank Redemption*, *WALL-E*, *American Beauty*, *Skyfall*), a younger guy who's around and still writing amazing scores, very original, who tends to do something that I like to do, which is blending different instruments that you don't

expect to hear in a film, and bringing different ethnic elements. Not necessarily playing ethnic music. Most of the time it's just playing different melodies and you don't really know what it is, so it's not sending you Brazilian music or Eastern music. It's the just the sonority – the sound is in there somehow mixed with the whole thing and it's something new.

"Even some of the new guys – Trent Reznor, for example, who did *The Social Network*. I don't try to do electronic music like he does, or mixing. But I do tend to process a lot. So I'll record a guitar and then I'll tweak the sound until it sounds like a robot, and then I'll have it playing in the background. So there is a lot of that in *RoboCop*, where we would record sometimes just a drill drilling something in the wall. Then

// "THE SCORE IS COMPLETELY NEW BUT WE TRIED TO HINT THAT 'THIS IS STILL ROBOCOP'"

I'd process that sound and it's playing in the background mixed with all these other sounds we'd record. I'd put some nails in. There's a lot of metallic sounds in this film that I tried to blend with the warmer sound of the orchestra and the percussion. For obvious reasons – he's more than half metal. It's been a fun process, coming up with different sounds and creating all these different things for the film."

SFX: Can you take us through some of the score's key tracks and themes?

PB: "Some of what we tried to do is create different sounds or themes for different parts of the film. So there's the OmniCorp theme – it's associated with the company or whenever Michael Keaton is on screen. It's very precise and very robotic. So you have a lot of the pulses and the little beats that go with a melody that sticks out. Not every time, a lot of the times when we're referring to OmniCorp or we're with OmniCorp that sound comes up.

"When we're with the robots, a lot of the time it's more industrial. So when we're seeing the ED-209's and 208's walking on screen, it's more industrial. You have these dirty processed guitars and a lot of the metallic beats. Everything is big and grandiose. Then when we're with the family, it's softer. When you're seeing his wife and his kid going through this difficult time of losing the husband and him becoming something else. The different thing about this film and the first one is that he wakes up and he's a robot, but his mind is still there. So he's still human in a way.

"In the other film, he wakes up and he's a robot and then little by little his humanity starts coming back. In this film it's the opposite. So he wakes up after he becomes *RoboCop* and his mind is present but his body is gone. So there's this duality that we played in the music too. When you're with the family it's the softer side but it's never a 100% comfortable or soft or sweet. There's always different weird robotic sounds for which I've processed guitars.

"Then you have the big action scenes where the orchestra blares and all the percussion and electronics and everything playing at the same time are big, and you have gunshots, and hopefully you're able to hear everything in the end with all the sounds playing at the same time in those scenes, whether it's sound effects or music [Laughs]. That's the process we're in now, balancing the whole film, figuring out in which scenes how loud the music should play, how loud the sound effects should play, etc."

SFX: The original film has a note of satire and irony in its score, an arch tongue-in-cheek quality. Did you try to incorporate that note?

PB: "I don't know if we should be talking about it, but that's where the old score comes back a little bit. It's when we're with that side of the satire, when we bring a little bit of the old melody back. That's the idea of over the top and a little too much. It's like a tongue-in-cheek wink back to the original score. That's the way we used a little bit of the original theme, in that moment of satire or political weirdness. We've brought ideas from the first score back, and that's mostly where the original score plays in this film. We were trying to think of ways to pay homage, and that's the way that we found that it worked." ●

ED-209

WEAPONS

TWIN COBRA CANNONS PROVIDE PRECISION-STRIKE COVER FOR CLOSE-COMBAT SEARCHES WHILE ANTI-ARMOR HELLFIRE MISSILES OFFER 360-DEPLOYMENT FOR DEFENSIVE / DISRUPTIVE MANEUVERS. WARHEADS MAY VARY.

MATERIAL

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE YET BLAST RESISTANT, ALL UNITS POSSESS THE LATEST IN O-SHIELD MATERIAL, WRAPPING REACTIVE GRAPHENE ARMOR ON THE LIGHTEST LIQUID-STEEL INFUSED MESOSKELETAL STRUCTURE YET.

MEDIA

ARMED WITH FULL MEDIA CAPABILITY - 360 INFRASONIC CAMERAS AND AUDIO TARGETING - ED-209 OPERATES AS EVIDENCE RECORDER, ANALYZER AND TRANSMITTER. REAL-TIME BACKUP ENSURES OPERATIONAL SECURITY.

POWER

SOLAR O-CELLS DRAW DIRECTLY FROM THE STARS OR CAN BE REMOTELY CHARGED FROM EQUATORIAL FUEL STATIONS FOR BLACKOUT SORTIES (SUBTERRANEAN, ETC.). THE ULTIMATE IN CLEAN FUEL, ENRICHED O-CELLS POWER COMMUNICATIONS, MOTION, AND WEAPONRY.

TECH SPECS

SIZE

11' TALL (3.3528 METERS)

7,550 LBS. (FULLY LOADED)

SPEED

MAX ROAD "RUNNING", 30 KM/H (18.64 MPH)

MAX OFF-ROAD, 20 KM/H (12.43 MPH)

WEAPONS

TWIN .50 CAL. COBRA CANNONS
HELLFIRE MISSILES

MEDIA

DIGIX SHATTERPROOF CAMERAS W/
BATTLE STABILIZER

BIO-MYLAR MIC TRACKING (0.02%
DISTORTION)

MATERIAL

REACTIVE GRAPHENE ARMOR
LIQUID STEEL-INFUSED MESOSKELETON

BIO-SPECS

AWARENESS

CONVERSANT IN 1,500+ LANGUAGES

AI-ENABLED "CRISIS DECISION TREE"

RECOGNITION

"ALLY/THREAT" SENSOR PACKAGE
VOICE AND FACIAL IDENTIFICATION

IMPACT

9,000+ PROJECTED "LIFE-SAVES"
HONOREE, BAGHDAD'S "BRIGHT FUTURE'S
PROGRAM"

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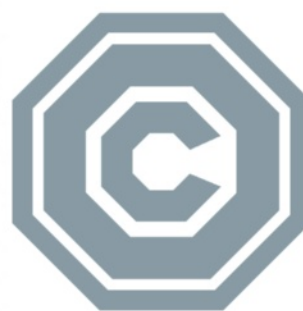
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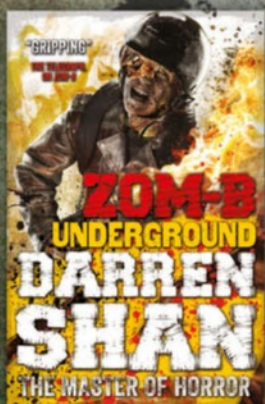
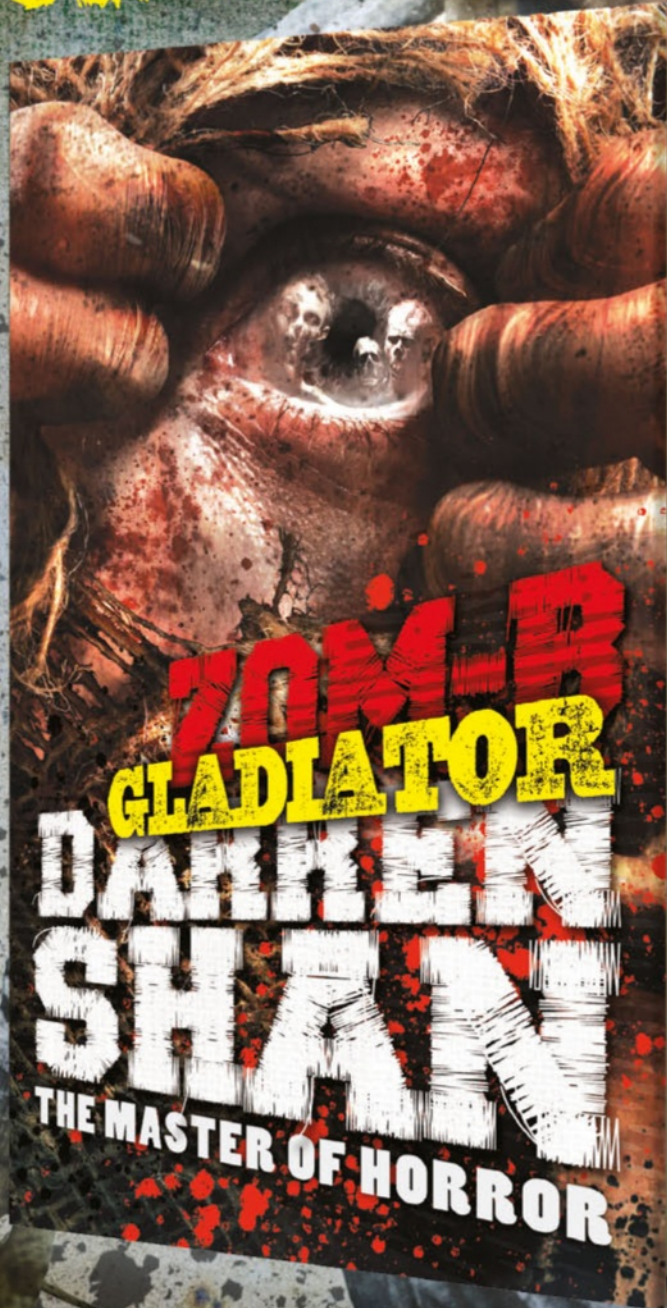
OUT 2ND JANUARY

FROM THE MASTER
OF HORROR
**DARREN
SHAN**

'IT'S A LEAN,
PUNCHY TALE'
SFX

'ENGROSSING'
STARBURST

'GRIPPING'
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WHY STOP AT COPS?



RoboCops are all well and good, but why stop there? Other emergency services could do with a bit of cyborg upgrading, reckons **Jayne Nelson**

ROBOPARAMEDIC

PRIME DIRECTIVES

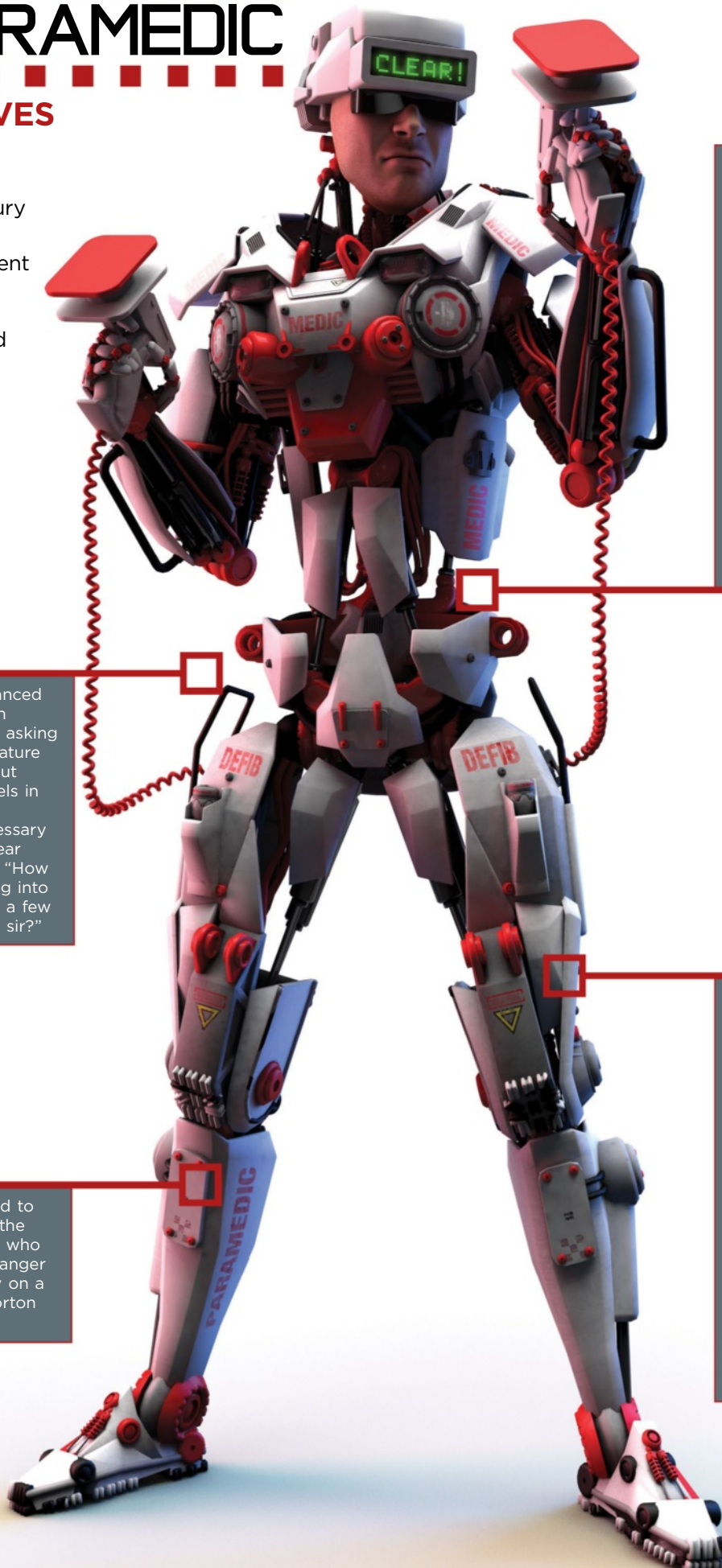
- To diagnose illness and injury
- To treat illness and injury
- To collect credit card payments after treatment (US version)
- To collect National Insurance numbers and then put patients on endless waiting lists before treatment (UK version)

Their number one priority is to help sick or injured human beings, and thus they have been designed to carry everything any medic could possibly require. However, given that space on a RoboParamedic is at a premium, all items have been shrunk down to fit inside its torso, from rolls of bandages (60ft rolled into a ball the size of a thumbnail) to an array of saws, scalpels and needles attached to its hands, Swiss Army Knife-style. Some argue that this makes RoboParamedic a scary sight, but we must remember that they are here to serve us.

RoboParamedics contain advanced computing algorithms that can diagnose illness not only from asking questions ("Please state the nature of the medical emergency") but from measuring the stress levels in the voice or breathing of the respondent. This saves unnecessary small-talk such as "Sorry to hear you're not feeling well today", "How on Earth did you twist your leg into that position?" or "You've had a few too many tonight, haven't you sir?"

RoboParamedics were released to great fanfare in 2032 to ease the burden on human paramedics who were facing more and more danger out on the streets, particularly on a Saturday night in Chipping Norton after the pubs have closed.

Each RoboParamedic contains more drugs than your average chemist's shop, ensuring that they can treat patients instantly without waiting for human doctors to intervene. Sadly, this also makes them a target for those who wish to steal their pharmaceuticals. To ensure the safety of each expensive RoboParamedic, their outside shell has been electrified. In the unlikely event of accidental electrocution of an innocent victim, the upside is that the RoboParamedic is already on the scene to administer treatment.



ROBOTRAFFICWARDEN

PRIME DIRECTIVES

- To monitor and control traffic at all times
- To reprimand motorists who break the law
- To deter potential disobedience by lingering in a menacing fashion by tempting parking spots
- To silence and incapacitate angry motorists

RoboTrafficWardens were rolled out en masse in 2026 to cope with the chaos caused by 2024's controversial money-making parking laws ("Motorists must pay a fine for every minute spent sitting motionless on a road surface, barring the minutes spent dealing with a RoboTrafficWarden fining them for sitting motionless").

RoboTrafficWardens are programmed to automatically know if there *is* legal parking between 7am-7pm on Burnaby Street on a Sunday in the middle of summer, avoiding discussions about all the times you've parked there before without paying, bloody hell this isn't fair, can't you let me off this once you big metal bastard? They can also tell instantaneously if you're lying about your car having broken down just by asking the car's onboard personality system if its driver is a big fat liar.

RoboTrafficWardens patrol our streets tirelessly in order to keep traffic flowing, vehicles from blocking important routes and humans from being dicks behind the wheel. A recent hydraulics upgrade has also given RoboTrafficWardens the ability to simply pick up an offending car, shake the human out of the door and drop it into a special crusher. Naturally the car's owner pays for the privilege. Our roadways must be kept moving, citizens.

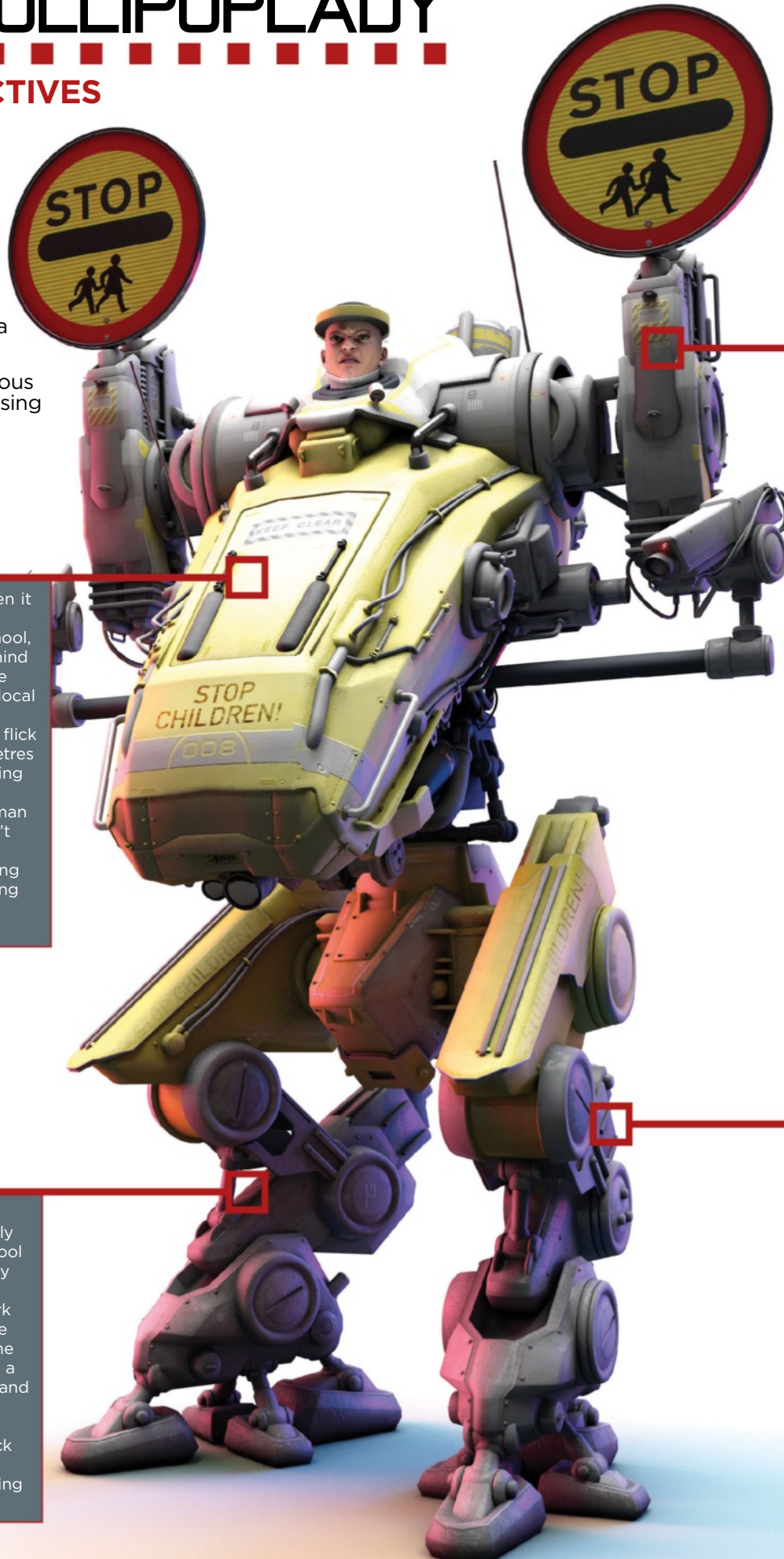
Human Traffic Wardens were feared and reviled the world over and were often subject to abuse and physical violence from disgruntled motorists. This was a serious matter that had to be addressed. To help their robotic replacements to cope in similar situations, RoboTrafficWardens are fitted with a kaleidoscopic array of swear words, insults, aspersions and name-calls. They also know kung fu.



ROBOLOLLIPOPLADY

PRIME DIRECTIVES

- To stop traffic
- To usher school children across a road safely
- To administer scowls to motorists grumbling about having to stop at a school crossing
- To remain impervious to the dull, depressing gloom of a rainy Monday morning



Safety is paramount when it comes to ferrying your children to and from school, and nothing eases the mind of a worried parent more than knowing that your local RoboLollipopLady can merely raise a hand and flick a dangerous car 200 metres down the road, thus saving lives. Since these robots took over from their human counterparts, there hasn't been a single accident involving a school crossing in the entire world. Driving insurance, however, has gone through the roof.

By using sophisticated sensors that automatically size up and weigh a school bag, a RoboLollipopLady can tell if a child has forgotten their homework and will send them home to get it. Alternatively, the technology can assess if a child is bringing contraband into the school such as alcohol, drugs or Mrs Miller's puppy (who snuck into the house last night and little Jimmy isn't going to give him back).

RoboLollipopLadies have many skills, not least keeping a careful eye-lens on approaching traffic. With their built-in lollipop sign they can light up a road, herd wayward children together using a forcefield, fire projectiles at threatening vehicles and deflect the rude words used by rush-hour drivers from impressionable ears by using sonic frequency shields.

RoboLollipopLadies are also fluent in child psychology. This means they can ascertain if the sprogs will cause trouble for their teachers that day, if they're planning on bullying anyone or if they're thinking about skiving off later and hanging out by the chip shop. A stern rebuke will be issued.

THEY HAD THE TECHNOLOGY. THEY COULD REBUILD THEM. AND WHAT THANKS DO THEY GET FOR MAKING THEM BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER? LOTS OF WHINGING ABOUT LOST HUMANITY. **MATT BIELBY** COUNTS DOWN THE GREATEST MEN MACHINE IN FICTION.

THEY HAD THE TECHNOLOGY. THEY COULD REBUILD THEM. AND WHAT THANKS DO THEY GET FOR MAKING THEM BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER? LOTS OF WHINGING ABOUT LOST HUMANITY. **MATT BIELBY** COUNTS DOWN THE GREATEST MEN MACHINE IN FICTION.

SCIENCE FICTION

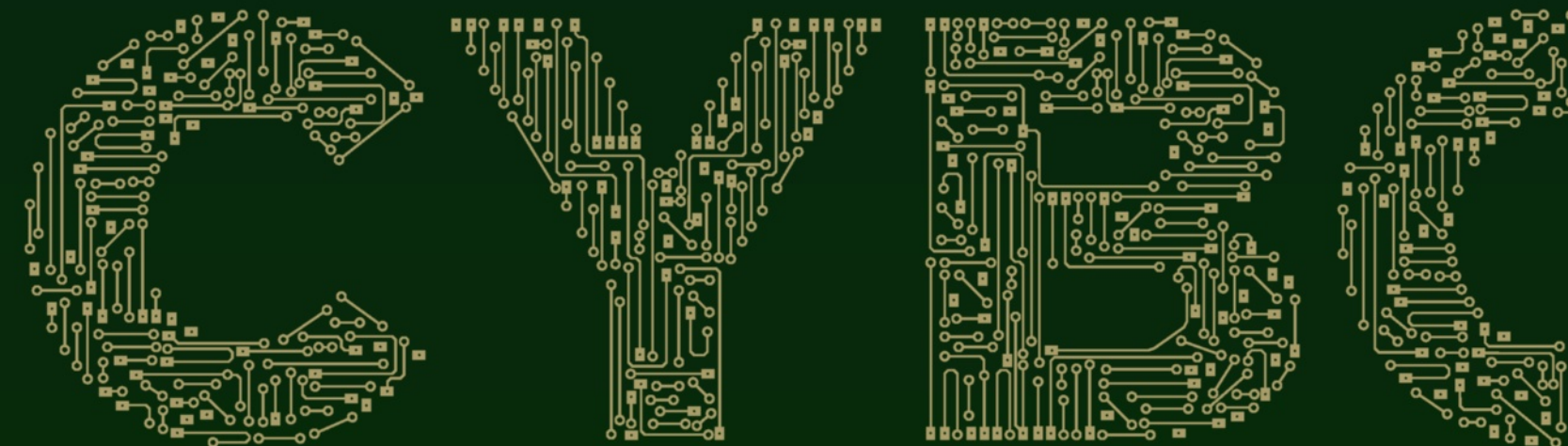
Judge Dredd (artificial eyes) can properly be considered a cyborg, as can whiny old metal-hand, Luke Skywalker. Get really picky, and anyone with a pacemaker could legitimately be called one too, as the core definition is simply a being that is made from both organic and synthetic parts.

Yet you will find none of these characters in the pages that follow. Why? Because their (minor) cyborg status is at best a side issue, the last thing of interest about them.

All the great fictional cyborgs are instead *defined* by their condition – a synthesis of the organic and the artificial that brings with it both strength and

tragedy; they can do more than we can but, damn, how they wish to be just the same as us once more.

Combining horror and wish-fulfilment in varying quantities, cyborgs are amongst the most compelling of science fiction creations, and crop up *everywhere*. As one of the most famous screen examples is so fond of saying, “Resistance is futile.”



25



Head boy. Poor old MODOK was never much of a looker.

MODOK

A revolting Humpty Dumpty, this huge mutant head floating in a giant metal chair, his withered arms and legs drooping at his side, has long been one of the joke villains of the Marvel Universe - but also one of its most memorable and disturbing. MODOK was a great late-'60s addition to the Captain America mythos, the Frankenstein's monster-like creation of mad scientist cabal AIM that, inevitably, took on and conquered his creators. The hilarious acronym behind his name, Mental Organism Designed Only For Killing, is once heard, never forgotten, but creator Jack Kirby clearly had some sympathy for his vicious ugly bug. Yes, he's a single-minded distillation of intelligence gone wrong, but he's also a pitiable captive of both a nature he didn't chose and the relentless clamp of his metal chair.

24



Axel was mad, but he was also a dab hand with geraniums.

AXEL PRESSBUTTON

Second division star of the '80s *Warrior* magazine, this "psychotic cyborg" was the chest, bald head and remaining arm of a hard-drinking, homicidal, sex-mad ex-florist, his body eaten away by a sentient fungus, and replaced by big, clompy legs, a cleaver-blade arm, and a big red button on his torso which gives him an orgasm when pressed. He'd originated in '70s music papers like *Sounds*, created by Steve Moore and Alan Moore, and in *Warrior* teamed with sexy "Laser Eraser" Mystra Mystralis for ultra-violent space hitman comedy adventures.

23

INSPECTOR GADGET

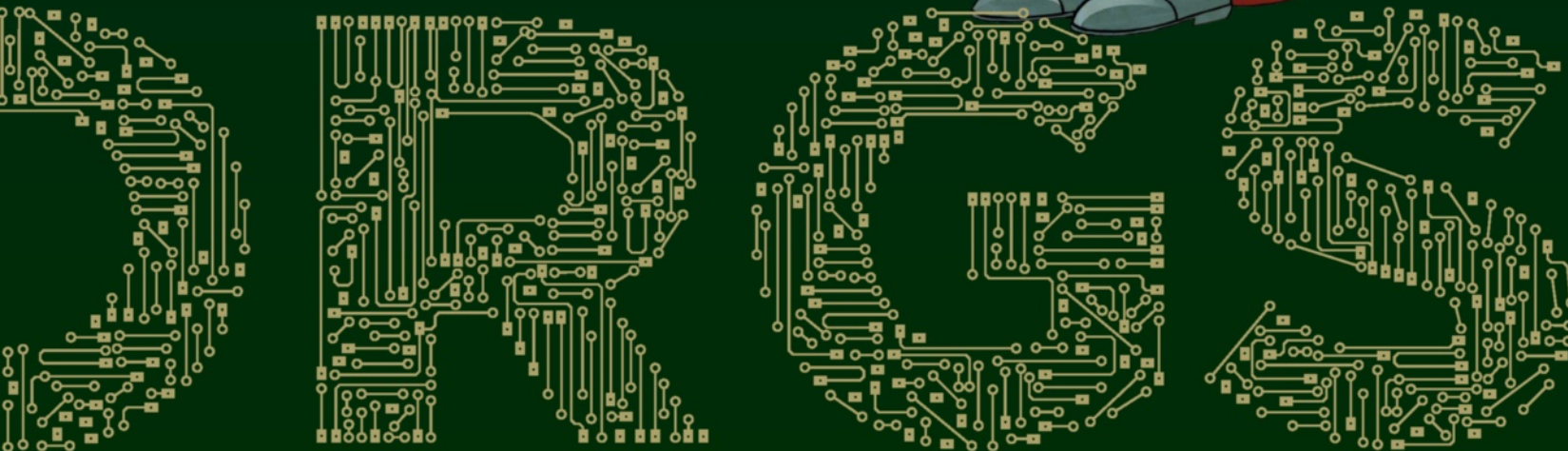
Occasionally a cyborg will have no worries about their new condition, and so it was with Inspector Gadget: the incompetent, clumsy, generally good-natured detective hero of an '80s animated TV show of the same name. The cartoon was a co-production between French and Canadian companies, with the animation outsourced to Japan and Taiwan.

Under his classic Inspector Clouseau trenchcoat, our hero is packed with gadgets of seemingly infinite variety - phones and magnifying glasses and roller skates and helicopter blades - all accessed by shouting "Go-go-gadget" and then naming the useful item.

These assist in his battles against the unseen Dr Claw and his evil MAD agents, but yet more useful are dumb luck and his smart helpers, notably niece Penny and her intelligent dog, Brain.



Get smart! Inspector Gadget was a staple of '80s kids' TV.



22



Space titanium: like normal titanium, but oddly cheap looking.



Tokyo under attack AGAIN. Seriously people, just move.

MECHAGODZILLA, GIGAN AND MECHA-KING GHIDORAH

Several bad guy beasts from the Toho Godzilla giant monster movies are clearly cyborgs. MechaGodzilla looks like a giant robot dinosaur made of "space titanium", but is actually (in most depictions) guided by

living human brain cells, and later appears to contain further organic components. Gigan (the first monster to make Godzilla bleed!) is quick to turn tail and run, despite appearing to be a giant space monster augmented with

huge metal hooks for hands and a buzzsaw built into his tummy. And three-headed dragon King Ghidorah is at one point replaced by a cyborg version, Mecha-King Ghidorah, who battles the Big G to a standstill.

21



Yeah, that sounds like good advice to us. Those poor bunnies!

WE3

Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely's cyborg lab rats – to be precise, prototype "animal weapons" based around a dog, a cat and a rabbit – escape the city in their battle armour and flee through the countryside, pursued by the American military: it's *The Incredibles* meets *The Plague Dogs*, with a Deathlok spin. Though only a tight three issues long, the tale of Bandit, Tinker and Pirate remains ultra-memorable, full of compelling visuals, knockout action, and the inevitable heartbreak of the unhappy cyborg pet. Sadly a proposed CG film version appears to have stalled for now.

20



Do cyborgs have to dye their hair, or does it just change colour?

MAJOR MOTOKO KUSANAGI

The major manga/anime franchise *Ghost in the Shell* – known as *Mobile Armored Riot Police* in Japan – heaves with mid-21st Century cyborgs populating its fictional New Port City, not least our likely-bisexual cyberpunk heroine, Major Motoko Kusanagi. She's basically a human brain in a mass-produced body that happens to be shaped like an attractive and (usually) purple-haired young woman, though one secretly packed with special combat tech. Naturally she has a complicated, hidden past and while political intrigue and anti-terrorist action are the main focus of the series, lyrical meditation on what it means to be human also runs through the thing like writing through a stick of rock.

19 CYBORG

It often seems quite fun to be a cyborg – so many of them look just like regular people, but with special abilities – so it's quite refreshing to be able to take one glance at major Teen Titan (and, later, minor JLAer) Cyborg and think: nah, not for me.

He arrived with the 1980, *X-Men* influenced revival of DC's classic teen hero book, a comic packed with teen angst alongside all the cosmic drama. And Cyborg was central to much of it, his hopelessly on-the-nose name doing little to disguise the truth of the matter: this well-built black teen was more metal than man, and it wasn't long before, "Why couldn't you let me die?"-type cries were echoing around Titans Tower.

The son of scientists Silas and Elinore, Victor Stone was a super-smart kid, but prone to finding himself in trouble – and when he's mutilated by an extra-dimensional jelly-monster on a trip to STAR Labs, his folks save his life with shiny steel prosthetics and implants. Yes, he loses his girl and is banned from school athletics, but when he saves the UN from terrorists he's invited to join the Titans, and finds a degree of acceptance, even love. Cyborg's abilities – strength, speed, flight, plus assorted weapons and gadgets – have fluctuated over the years, as has his attitude. His New 52 incarnation (cause of injury: an exploding Mother Box) has been given a new lease of life as a core JLA member, alongside Superman and Batman. Once again, issues of whether he's truly human or not crop up alongside the superheroics.



Victor clearly spent a long time coming up with that alias.

18

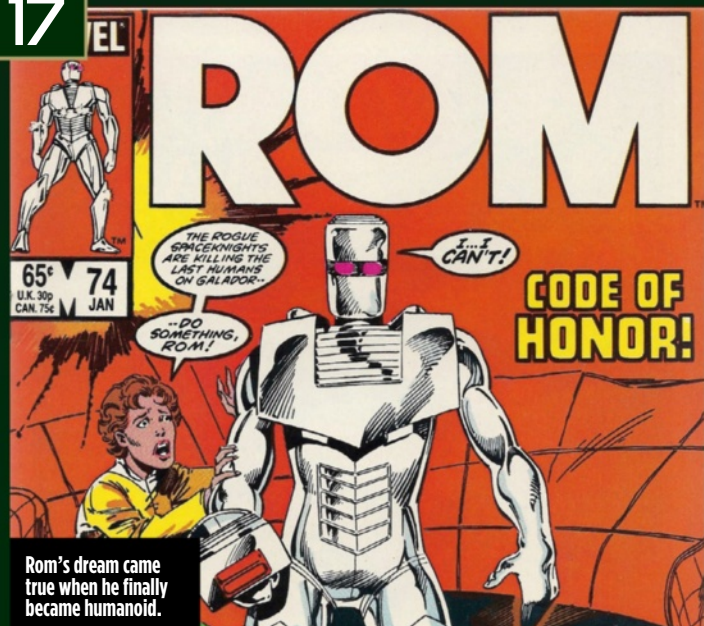


Poor old Deathlok – he's dead and not particularly loving it.

DEATHLOK

Unlike most other Marvel heroes, and vastly before his time, Rich Buckler and Doug Moench's troubled cyborg hero – an ugly, reanimated corpse carried around by mechanical limbs and rammed with combat software – operated in a corrupt, collapsing future America, where he wrestled with assorted monsters, a venal system, and lashings of '70s angst. Deathlok "the Demolisher" originally ran in *Astonishing Tales* for only 11 issues, but remains well remembered and much liked. He's been revived three or four times, and has influenced numerous cyborgs that have come since, not least in his looks (the half-metal face is now commonplace) and his antagonistic relationship with his on-board computer makes him a man arguing with his Sat Nav 30 years before the first TomTom.

17



Rom's dream came true when he finally became humanoid.

ROM SPACEKNIGHT

A late '70s Parker Bros/Palitoy action figure who became the star of a much better, and remarkably enduring, licensed Marvel Comics spin-off, Rom was a cyborg soldier from the idyllic planet Galador, one of many "Spaceknights" who've sacrificed their organic forms to become weapons against the Dire Wraiths, aggressive, shape-shifting alien invaders. Rom looks like a robot, but there are bits of a man left in there. The promise is he'll be restored to humanoid form when the Wraiths are finally defeated and, amazingly, after many battles he finally gets his wish.

16



Jaime Sommers swings into action in *The Bionic Woman*.

BIONIC WOMAN

Jaime Sommers was the distaff Steve Austin, her legs, arm and, bizarrely, ear damaged beyond repair in a skydiving accident. The tennis pro was rebuilt, *Six Million Dollar Man*-style, with bionic parts and similarly becomes an OSI secret agent, and enjoys slightly more domestic versions of the same adventures, posing as nuns and air stewardesses and battling truth serum shampoo and "Fembots", eventually earning a bionic pooch, Max, for her troubles. After three seasons, her last episode is particularly telling, as Jaime goes on the run from OSI, wanting to live her life on her own.

15



Alita was known as Gally in the original Japanese version.

BATTLE ANGEL ALITA

This classic '90s manga series – there have been anime spin-offs too – sees a memory-wiped cyborg torso found in a post-apocalyptic rubbish dump by a kindly

cybernetics doctor, who takes care of her. But, actually, once rebuilt she finds she *does* remember one thing: the cyborg martial art Panzer Kunst. She soon decides to use her

one skill as a bounty hunter. Violent, faintly satirical and often lyrical, it's an action series heaving with subtext. James Cameron is still promising a mega-budget film version.

14



Some Cylons look and feel human. Probably not this one though.

CYLONS

In the original *Battlestar Galactica* of the late '70s, the evil Cylons were alien warrior robots; if there was an organic component to their make-up, it was invisible, though one who appeared human did crop up late on in the series.

In the triumphant re-imagining, however, things are more complicated: these Cylons were built by people to be their servants, and though many look like robots, they often seem to contain organic components. And then there are the “skinjobs” like Sharon and Number Six – still Cylons, but built of organic parts, to the point that they're indistinguishable from the real thing – and the rarer hybrids, seemingly bridging the gap between the two.

Though the story is complicated, and heaving with dead ends and misinformation, it seems the Cylons, perhaps motivated by their religious beliefs, have been striving to become more like their enemy, to help beat them or just understand them, and have been deliberately introducing an organic element to their mix to help do so. Robots replacing strong, sure steel with squidgy meat, then. It's a neat reversal of this list's general trend.

13



Man Plus: Likely the only book with a cyborg called Roger.

ROGER TORRAWAY

The hero of Frederik Pohl's 1976 Nebula Award-winning novel *Man Plus* is a Mars coloniser in the near future, his body replaced with a cyborg one to give him some chance of surviving there. Roger Torraway is the first successful subject of the *Man Plus* program, but becomes increasingly alienated from his wife and the rest of mankind as he gets used to his new, artificial Martian body with its plastic skin, giant bug-like eyes, solar panels (shaped like wings) on his back, his unnecessary penis removed, a built-in computer to boss him about... There's a doozy of a twist towards story's end.

12



He may look tough, but he's secretly really into The Smiths.

CABLE

Cable is, if we're honest, not a great character, but he is an enduring one. His look – hulking, covered in pouches and bandoliers, armed with ludicrously huge guns, with a glowing bionic eye, some scar tissue and a metal arm – has become the default visual for comic book tough guys and cyborgs. So much so that similar characters virtually choked the industry in the '90s like some kind of invasive blanket weed.

To be fair to Cable, he's not *only* a badass Man With No Name type, point-man for the awful flood of similar anti-heroes. He has other qualities too: telekinesis and telepathic abilities, a heap of enigma, a convoluted, frightening destiny, and lots of suffering, pain and death in a background heavily based on the Kyle Reese storyline from *The Terminator*. His bionics are actually the result of a "techno-organic" virus trying to take over his body, something lately cured, though this has left much of his frame wasted and broken. A polarising character, often quoted when comic book professionals detail what they hated most about the '90s industry.

10



See, it's not the green eyes that give him away. It's that 'do...

THE BICENTENNIAL MAN

Isaac Asimov's 1976 Hugo and Nebula Award-winning novella and then novel (actually called *The Positronic Man*, and co-written with Robert Silverberg) spawned a film in 1999. All follow a trusted, increasingly soulful and sentient housekeeping android, Andrew, whose rich owners gradually upgrade him: a new thumb, a more emotive face, a nervous system (giving the senses of touch and taste), and such. Eventually he has blood and other organic components introduced, which will allow him to age and decay, just like the people he loves. He campaigns to be declared a human being, and finally gets his wish; in the extended versions we leave him on his deathbed, age 200, as he finally marries a woman from the family he's always cared for.

11

DARTH VADER

We don't always think of him as a cyborg – there's so much else going on with this fella – but this walking hymn to all things bad, his name a contraction of "Dark Death Invader" or some such, remains one of the most strikingly intimidating villains in all of science fiction, and his cyborg nature is crucial to the way he goes about things.

There's that unknowable face, like some Nazi death mask; the sweeping black cape of a pantomime villain; the stature; the superpowers; and that rasping, scuba-breathing, none-deeper voice. When we first met him it appeared possible Vader was just a man in a particularly fetishistic suit, but time (and six movies) have taught us different. We never know quite how much of him is machine, how much flesh, but having seen the injuries a young Anakin Skywalker was left with at the end of *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith* – his limbs severed, his body burned – it's not difficult to guess. Many films have struggled to get much out of characters with no visible face – think of the Spidey/Goblin confrontations in the first *Spider-Man* film – but Vader proves just how much power the unknowable can hold.



Black garb. Shiny helmet. Heavy breathing. Hmm...

9



"I've seen things you wouldn't believe: the Chuckle Brothers."

ROY BATTY AND THE REPLICANTS

Some cyborgs are more sympathetic than others. The replicants of *Blade Runner* – and the original book, *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* – are doomed but poetically so; “the candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long” and all that. Philip K Dick’s novel called this artificial worker class – built for off-world duties, and with a built-in limited lifespan – androids or “andys”, but the movie

is deliberately more vague. Are they totally organic, though artificial? Or do they contain mechanical parts, perhaps ones that mimic the organic in some way? That would make them cyborgs, for certain. Some certainly contain human memory implants, and believe themselves to *be* human...

Blade Runner acts as a police procedural, with a cop figure, Deckard, chasing down and

“retiring” desperate replicants who’ve escaped to Earth, most of whom are more powerful and nobler than he is. When he kills the last of them, the magnificent and introspective Roy Batty, Deckard escapes with one who’s been allowed to live, the innocent Rachael – and then, of course, there’s our hero’s much-discussed personal status. Is he a replicant too...?

8



Men of steel: the Cybermen are the Doctor's #2 nemesis.

CYBERMEN

There are no famous Cybermen, outside the odd “Cyber Leader” and such – but, lacking even a Davros figure (Trigger from *Only Fools* doesn’t count, OK?), these self-created cyborg conquerors are frightening *because* of their uniform look. They’re another science fiction attempt to come up with something as scary as the Nazi SS. And this time they almost succeeded: the Doctor has been battling different models of these guys since 1966. They’re an entire species that deliberately replaced more and more of their organic parts with artificial replacements in the name of survival until only their brains and perhaps other assorted odds and sods were left.

Originally cloth-faced alien cyborgs from Earth’s twin planet, Mondas, and more lately depicted as modified humans from a parallel universe, they represent our fear of rigid, controlled uniformity. And if they’ve never quite usurped the Daleks in the popular imagination, well, few have ever come closer.

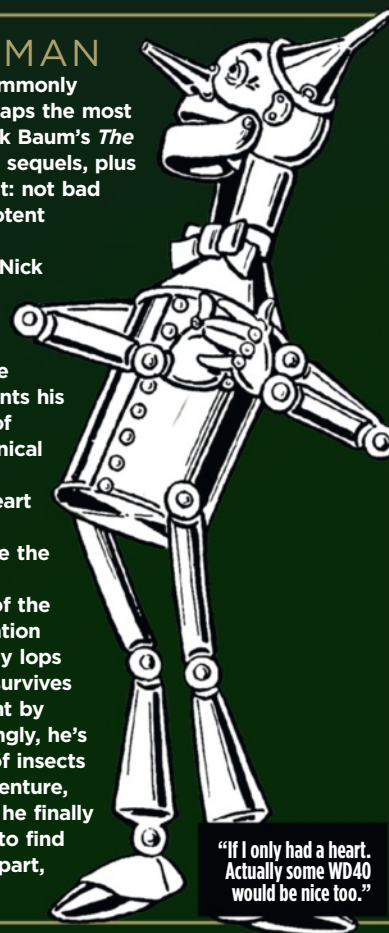
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TIN WOODMAN

The Tin Woodman (commonly known as “the Tin Man”) is perhaps the most iconic inhabitant of Oz in L Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz* and its sequels, plus the celebrated movie based on it: not bad going, considering how many potent competitors he has.

Once a regular bloke named Nick Chopper, he suffers a most uncommon fate: becoming the living embodiment of the old “grandfather’s axe” paradox. The Wicked Witch of the East enchants his axe to chop off his limbs, each of which he replaces with a mechanical spare. Soon he’s made from nothing but tin, and lacking a heart – either forgotten or deemed unnecessary – can no longer love the girl he once longed to marry.

In every way the Woodman of the books is a more formidable creation than that of the film. He regularly lops the heads off wild animals and survives being thrown from a great height by flying monkeys, though, confusingly, he’s often grief-stricken at the idea of insects coming to harm. In one late adventure, *The Tin Woodman Of Oz* (1918), he finally tracks down his lost love – only to find she has married a guy made, in part, from his own lost limbs. Typical.



“If I only had a heart. Actually some WD40 would be nice too.”

6



He'll be back – in 2015, apparently, with the new movie.



Cyborg hair: sure to be impeccably styled and tactfully placed.

THE T-800, CAMERON, MARCUS AND OTHER TERMINATORS

Terminators come in different styles, from those – like the liquid-metal T-1000 – that we must assume are pure robot, to ones like the original T-800 Arnold Schwarzenegger model, a “cybernetic organism” where a mechanical

exoskeleton is coated in time-travel fooling vat-grown flesh, skin and hair.

And then there are the ones that are more human than that, like Cameron from TV spin-off *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*

and Marcus Wright from *Terminator Salvation*. A Terminator/human hybrid, he's a death row inmate executed then revived in Terminator form, while retaining a human head and heart – like RoboCop with a better paint job.

5



“All this tech, but did I get a Phillips? Did I hell. Bloody jokers.”

THE BORG

Star Trek has boasted many villainous species over the years, but it was with the creation of this single-minded cyborg army that the *Next Generation* incarnation finally stepped out from the shadow of Kirk and co. The Borg collective consists of numerous assimilated alien species, all equipped with cybernetic implants and operating as drones in a hive arrangement. They're single-minded, highly advanced, rapidly adapting and driven by a need to drag everything and everyone into their way of life, thus achieving perfection.

4



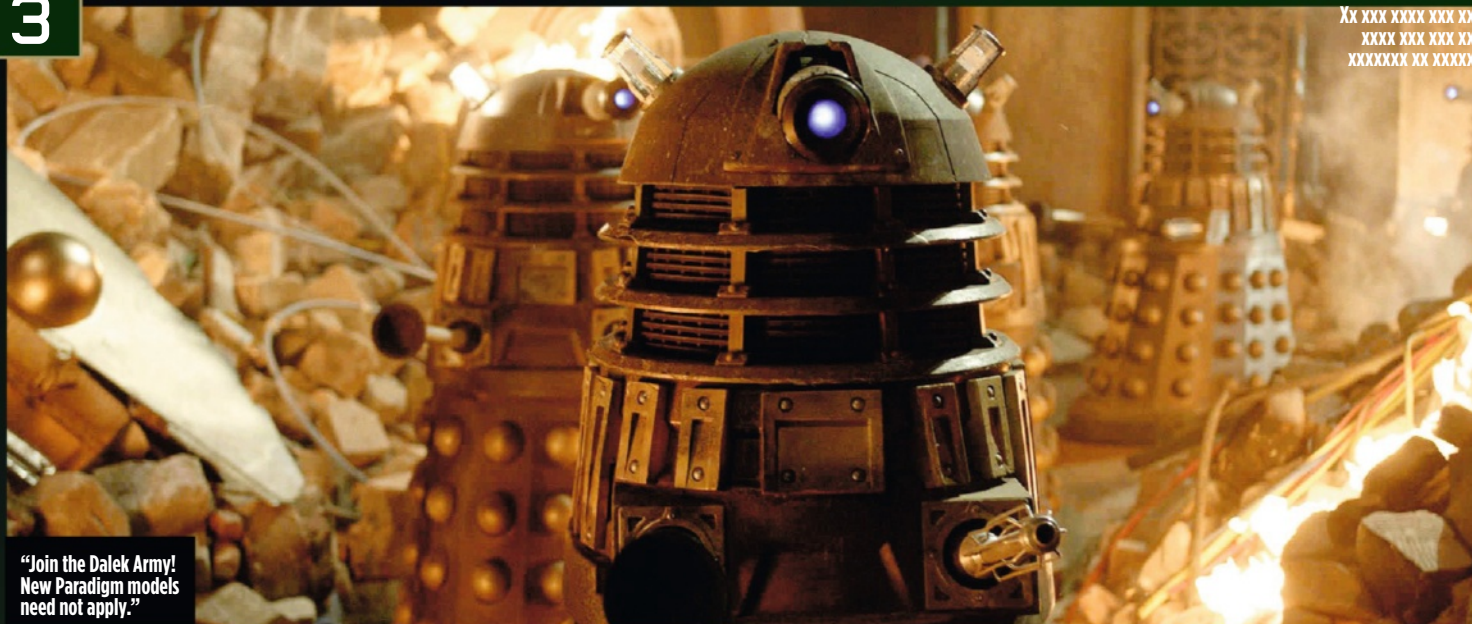
Molly wasn't in the 1994 film of *Johnny Mnemonic*. Lucky her.

MOLLY MILLIONS

William Gibson's 2004 novel *Neuromancer* wasn't just the key cyberpunk work – a word-of-mouth hit that cleared up at all the big SF awards, popularised the term “cyberspace” and legitimised what had, until then, been a minor subculture. It also introduced the archetypal hot, cynical hacker heroine in “razorgirl” Molly Millions, a cool, detached cyborg mercenary with her own deeply buried moral code and a host of cool nicknames and aliases: Sally Shears, Steppin' Razor and Rose Kolodny among them.

Molly – who first appears in the short story “Johnny Mnemonic” and later in the *Neuromancer* sequel *Mona Lisa Overdrive* – is packed with low-key stealth kit: sealed eye sockets sporting vision-boosting mirrored lenses that look like shades but are actually surgically attached to the skin; assorted implants to boost her metabolism, reflexes and other senses, and a four centimetre, double-edged retractable blade housed under each fingernail. Every badass, cool chick street samurai since owes a ton to Molly, who “walks it the way she talks it” and remains one of SF's most convincing female action heroes.

3



"Join the Dalek Army!
New Paradigm models
need not apply."

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DAVROS AND THE DALEKS

Grown ups? What do they know. They're always casually saying things like, "The Doctor's robot enemies, the Daleks". Their kids roll their eyes, and point out, "Actually, they're not robots..." It's a semantic battle that has raged for five decades now.

When we first met the Daleks, back in *Doctor Who's* second story (aptly titled "The

Daleks") we learned that there was something organic inside the conical casing: a starfish-cum-squid that was all that was left of a once handsome species called the Kaleds, from the planet Skaro. We later discovered that they had been genetically modified by mad scientist Davros (himself a cyborg, with a single cybernetic eye and a total reliance on a

sort of wheelchair/life-support system) to the point where they can now only survive while encased in their tank-like robotic shells.

Daleks like conquest, hating things and the word "Exterminate!" They fought in the Time War and are far less fond of compassion, impaired vision and the Oncoming Storm - or the Doctor, as we know him.

2



Harder, better, faster,
stronger... Rubbish at
snooker though.

THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN

In the mid-'70s, when *The Six Million Dollar Man* was a huge TV hit, being a cyborg looked amazing fun. Hero Steve Austin, test pilot and astronaut, crashes an experimental space plane in the desert and his ruined body is rebuilt using advanced mechanical replacement parts. He gets new legs, capable of running at 60mph and leaping 30 feet; he gets an incredibly strong new arm; and he

gets a replacement left eye with zoom and night vision facility. As the memorable opening sequence has it he's now, "Better than he was before. Better, stronger, faster" - and all for a bargain price tag referenced in the show's title.

Austin's missions - battling everything from terrorist attacks to alien invasions for a government office called OSI - only

sporadically touch upon the tragedy of his new half-human form. It's a far cry from the hero we meet in writer Martin Caidin's darker, more violent original novel *Cyborg*, on which the show was based. This Austin is less powerful and considerably more vicious - he kills many on his missions with a poison dart weapon built into one finger that was omitted from the more family-friendly TV version.

1



"No, seriously, I'm still *really* marked off about that glove..."

ROBOCOP

Many cyborg stories deal with the double-sided coin that is mechanical enhancement – increased abilities but compromised humanity – but none with quite the potent force of Paul Verhoeven's visceral original *RoboCop*, in which the ruined, barely-alive body of a normal street cop is recreated as a memory-wiped human tank – and the potent new weapon of a corrupt establishment seeking to make money from policing a crime-ridden near future version of Detroit.

Here we find every moral question you get in other classic cyborg stories, but writ large and loud: the horror when our hero discovers his new condition, the manipulations of those who've "built" him, the question mark over who owns the result, and the endless quest to find purpose. Plus, no other cyborg looks quite so amazing as RoboCop. Officer Murphy's face, brain and internal organs are all that remains of him, wired into a clunking, ungainly chassis that requires a "rudimentary

paste" sustenance (that looks almost tragically like baby food) and a huge metal chair to support it. If we were envious of a Steve Austin, a Molly Millions, or even a Roy Batty, that ends right here.

The list of influences on *RoboCop* is long: Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, Judge Dredd, *Rom* are amongst those often cited – but the shadow it casts is vaster yet. Once seen never forgotten, *RoboCop* dominates the way we feel about the cyborg condition. ●

FUTURECOPS



We've seen the future of law enforcement on our screens, but how is it shaping up in real life? **Jayne Nelson** investigates...

IMAGE: ISTOCK

IMAGE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The use of Predator Drones has proved wildly controversial.

The nature of policing is changing,” says a recent British report that went under the grandiose title “The Future Of The Force: Police, Technology And Serving The Public”.

“New technology will help forces to become more efficient, to keep officers on the frontline, and to provide a better service to the public.”

Well, we should hope so. If a police force doesn't move with the times you can bet your butt that the criminals they're supposed be fighting certainly will. And while nobody in their right mind would claim that Britain's police are at the very cutting edge of using technology to fight bad guys, they're not *quite* as behind the times as the stereotypical image of PC Plod on his pushbike, notebook and pencil in hand. For instance, the same report discovered that 81% of British police forces used social media to interact with the public. The Metropolitan Police in particular are popular on Twitter (@metpoliceuk), although there's a whole world of hitherto-unforeseen problems being caused right now by people reporting crimes and disturbances via tweets instead of dialling 999.

Elsewhere, 81% of forces have video surveillance technology. A whopping 90% expect smartphones to become a huge part of their jobs in the next few years, while 62% “expect to change the way they use technology for overseeing activities”.

Police here in the UK use tagging, tracking and networked databases on a daily basis. Despite budget issues, cutbacks and even legal challenges, the times are most definitely changing.

But what are the biggest law-enforcement changes on the way, not just here in the UK but worldwide? Can we expect real-life RoboCops to be stalking the streets one day? Here are some of the biggest innovations set to transform policing over the next few decades...

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS

Nobody can see perfectly into the future and prevent a crime from happening, despite the kind of sci-fi tech you see on shows like *Person Of Interest* (super-computers surveilling the whole country) or films such as *Minority Report* (bald psychics floating in a tub of goo). But despite this, some police forces are doing their damndest to figure out where they're needed *before* that all-important emergency call comes in, and

specially designed computer algorithms are helping them achieve good results.

Take PredPol, named by *Time* magazine as one of the best inventions of 2011. Created by Dr Jeff Brantingham, an anthropologist at UCLA, it uses the same technology once used to predict earthquake aftershocks to fight crime. “It predicts twice as much crime as any other existing system, even going head-to-head with a crime analyst,” says Brantingham. The computer algorithm he designed takes into account everything from previous crime statistics to the time of day, putting a special “red box” on a map where crimes could conceivably take place according to the data collected. If a police officer heads to the red box, they'll hopefully be in the right place at the right time to prevent something nasty from happening.

Sounds a bit vague, doesn't it? Yet it's surprisingly effective. Santa Cruz's police force has been using PredPol and in just the first six months burglaries in the area declined by 19%. A similar programme

// "PREDPOL TAKES INTO ACCOUNT EVERYTHING FROM PREVIOUS CRIME STATISTICS AND THE TIME OF DAY, PUTTING A "RED BOX" ON A MAP WHERE CRIMES COULD TAKE PLACE"

named Blue CRUSH (Criminal Reduction Utilising Statistical History – an acronym Gerry Anderson would have been proud of) has helped the Memphis Police Department for a while now: serious crime in the city fell by 30% in four years. And after installing predictive analytics programmes in 2006, Richmond, Virginia saw homicides down 32%, rapes down 19% and aggravated assaults down by 17%. Who needs to shave your head and climb into a bathtub in front of Tom Cruise when you've got computers?

DRONES

Unmanned drones are notoriously controversial, usually hitting the headlines after being used to strike targets in the Middle East as part of the USA's war on terror. While some can indeed be used to carry weapons – you can argue the moral complexities of this amongst yourselves – many more are equipped with filming technology, tracking equipment or sensors. This means that they can act as “spies” in the air, allowing the kind of monitoring for criminal behaviour that would have been impossible until very recently.

At the moment, most drones used by law enforcement agencies are involved in fighting the drugs war: keeping tabs on drug traffickers while they move through restricted airspace, for example. Others, such as the T-Hawk Micro Air Vehicle (MAV) recently tested by the Miami-Dade Police

Department, are used to monitor crime scenes during emergencies, where keeping control of events with people on the ground could be hazardous. Effectively, drones are alternatives to police helicopters: they can fly during dangerous weather, they're cheaper, they're more mobile and they can be operated without putting anybody in harm's way.

The police in Eden Prairie, Minnesota take a Recon Scout Throwbot with them when they work – it's a camera that they use to scout out crime scenes. “It deploys with us like we would carry a rifle,” explains their Sergeant Carter Staaf. “If we have a warrant search and there are multiple levels in a home, we can throw it upstairs and get a set of eyes up there.”

Incidentally, this technology isn't limited to American forces. In 2010 Merseyside Police used a remote-controlled helicopter to help ensure the arrest of a suspected car thief, who had been lost by the officers following him thanks to thick fog. He was the first person in the UK to be arrested with the aid of a drone.

WEAPONS

Tasers are kinda cool. Sure, no one wants to be shot by one. Not only are they painful, they can trigger heart attacks in a minority of people, and they make you lose control of your bladder, which is something to consider next time you're watching a movie and the

// "MOST DRONES USED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE INVOLVED IN FIGHTING THE DRUGS WAR, WHILE OTHERS MONITOR CRIME SCENES"

hero gets zapped with one. But still, back when most of us were nippers, the idea of a gun shooting electricity at a criminal was a pure sci-fi idea – a weapon you'd see on *Star Trek*, not the kind of thing you'd see your local bobby pulling out of his pocket while apprehending a mugger. Phasers aren't quite the same thing as a Taser, but you get our point. Technology has already equipped our police with some pretty cool futuristic tech, and there's even more on the way...

In addition to using the ubiquitous Taser (and in some cases its bigger cousin, the Taser XREP, which is bloody huge and bloody terrifying), law enforcement agencies around the world have been experimenting with all kinds of gadgets and gizmos. Crowd dispersal is an important part of policing, for obvious reasons, and has prompted many different kinds of weapon. One of these is the LRAD (Long Range Acoustic Device), which produces sound waves at an incredibly uncomfortable frequency for human hearing: your first instinct when it



Real life heat ray: The Active Denial System is in the testing stage.

IMAGE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

hits your ears is to get the hell out of there. LRADs are also used at airports to keep runways clear of animals and have been deployed by civilian ships to fend off pirates, with limited success. It's only over the past couple of years that they've been used by police forces around the world to break up protests – although, again, it's only been with limited success.

Naturally, many are concerned that LRADs can cause serious hearing damage, although that pales into insignificance compared to the ADS (Active Denial System), which is basically the real-life equivalent of a heat ray. Okay, there's *some* exaggeration there, but as far as directed-energy weapons go, it sounds horrifying. A giant microwave beam, it heats up a small fraction of the first layer of skin until the pain forces the victim to back down. A spokesman for the Air Force Research Laboratory tried it and says:

"For the first millisecond, it just felt like the skin was warming up. Then it got warmer and warmer and you felt like it was on fire... As soon as you're away from that beam your skin returns to normal and there is no pain."

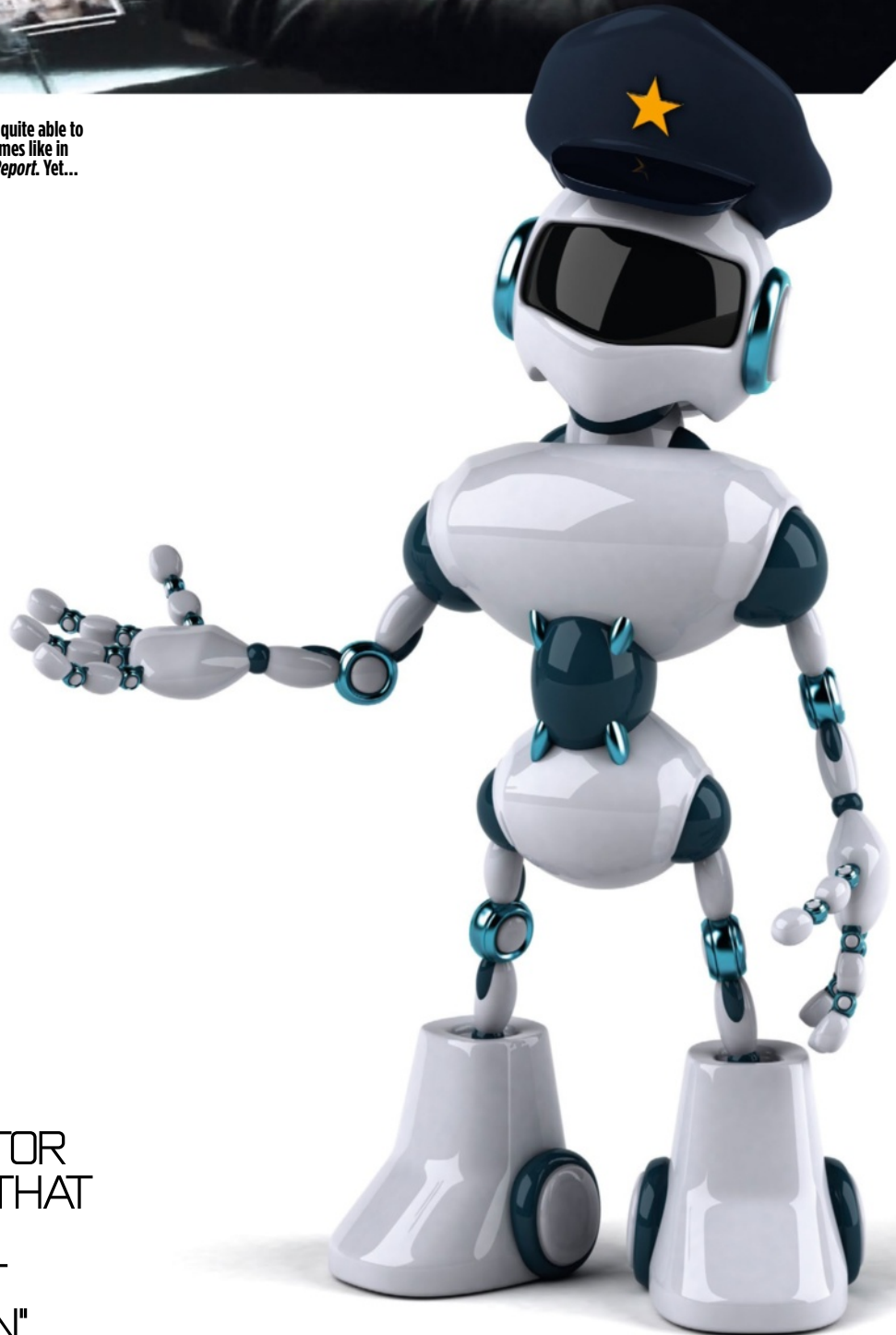
Raytheon, the company behind the ADS technology (they call their product Silent Guardian) has listed its benefits on its website. It "minimises collateral damage; provides real-time ability to establish intent and de-escalate aggression; does not cause physical harm; prevents injury and death; provides precise effects at a longer range than current less-than-lethal systems; fills the gap between shout and shoot."

All very interesting, and in 2010 the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department announced it was going to use the technology on its prisoners at Pitchess Detention Centre in order to break up fights. After all, if you're thinking of starting a ruckus in the prison canteen, the thought of the guards turning a giant heat ray on you might make you think twice! However, the technology is still wildly controversial and any police force willing to use it will have to deal with some strong objections. There are also practical considerations to be taken into account. Currently, the ADS takes 16 hours just to boot up, and its potency is reduced when used in rainy or snowy conditions. That could prove to be problematic...

Not all weapons being used by law enforcement are as radical as these examples: the LED Incapacitator, for example, is a pen-flashlight that shines a laser at a victim that flashes so quickly it can cause disorientation. Used by the Department Of Homeland Security at some border controls, these are small and easy to use but are very controversial. Remember what happened in 1997 when flashing



We're not quite able to predict crimes like in *Minority Report*. Yet...



// "THE LED INCAPACITATOR IS A PEN-FLASHLIGHT THAT SHINES A LASER THAT FLASHES SO QUICKLY IT CAUSES DISORIENTATION"



IMAGE: ISTOCK

IMAGE: LRAD CORPORATION

lights in an episode of *Pokémon* sent more than 600 Japanese children into seizures? Imagine having that power in your pocket. Nasty...

ARMOUR

Kevlar vests are a must for your tactical response teams, but will police officers ever find themselves wearing armour full-time while on the beat? Hopefully not – and it seems unlikely in the UK, where guns aren't as common as they are elsewhere in the world. Full-on *RoboCop*-style body armour is definitely a no-no, then, although in recent years some corners of the military and special operations forces have experimented with a ballistic vest with the catchy nickname "Dragon Skin".

Made from two-inch overlapping circular discs which resemble scales, hence the name, Dragon Skin is said to be stronger than traditional body armour. Officers at the Fresno Police Department started to use it in their vests from 2006. However, since then its effectiveness has been called into question by the US Army, and the debate over its use has rumbled on ever since – mainly in law courts.

Bizarrely, Dragon Skin is the armour of choice for a real-life vigilante who lives in Seattle. Phoenix Jones is the head of the Rain City Superhero Movement and has hit the headlines several times while trying to fight crime wearing a costume and mask. So far he's been stabbed and shot during his patrols; the vest he was wearing stopped a bullet during an incident in Tacoma in 2009. At the very least, you have to admit it's better than Spandex.

HULC SUIT AND XOS EXOSKELETON

Exoskeleton armour is a growing area of research – think a combination of *RoboCop* and the loader Ripley strapped herself into in *Aliens*. While these are currently being developed for the military and might be prohibitively expensive for your average police department, prices could come down if they're mass-marketed in the future.

So far we have a suit named HULC (Human Universal Load Carrier), which was designed to help soldiers carry heavy loads of up to 200lbs for extended periods without fatigue. The suit was developed at the Berkeley Robotics & Human Engineering Laboratory and has now been licensed by Lockheed Martin for military, industrial and medical use. The suit can run for 72 hours on jet fuel (admittedly a little tough to come by at your local Shell garage) and looks set to be a big hit.

Elsewhere, Sarcos, a company owned by Raytheon (developers of the heat ray mentioned above), has developed the XOS Exoskeleton, which can also lift 200lbs with “minimal strain”. Developed by Dr

Stephen Jacobsen after he realised “that if humans could work alongside robots, they must also be able to work inside robots”, the Exoskeleton weighs 150lbs itself but will help in combat situations when it comes to firing heavy weapons or carrying wounded soldiers. This suit, more than anything, is about as close to Iron Man as we're probably going to get for a while.

A REAL-LIFE ROBOCOP?

A laboratory team at Florida International University is currently working with the US Navy Reserves to build a real-life patrolling police robot. No, really, we're not making this up. The robot would be controlled by disabled police officers and military veterans, allowing them the chance to be “on the streets” without actually having to go anywhere. It's early days for the project at the moment, but Lt Commander Jeremy Robins, who's working on getting it off the ground, sees a big future if they can get some important parts to work.

“The big design hurdle we face is, strangely enough, the exact same hurdle police officers face with the public every

// "A TEAM AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IS WORKING TO BUILD A PATROLLING POLICE ROBOT"

day,” he told CNET in 2012. “The TeleBot has to look intimidating and authoritative enough so that people obey its commands – because of course it's not the telebot telling you what to do, it's the disabled police officer controlling the telebot who's telling you what to do. On the flip side, it has to be approachable enough so that a lost three-year-old feels comfortable coming up to the telebot and asking for help finding her mother. That's a challenging design problem, and one which I'm sure will take many iterations before we get it perfectly right.”

It remains to be seen, of course, whether their TeleBot will still be in love with its human wife and decide it doesn't want to remain a tool of a multinational corporation. Guess we'll find out when the future of law enforcement finally arrives. 🤖

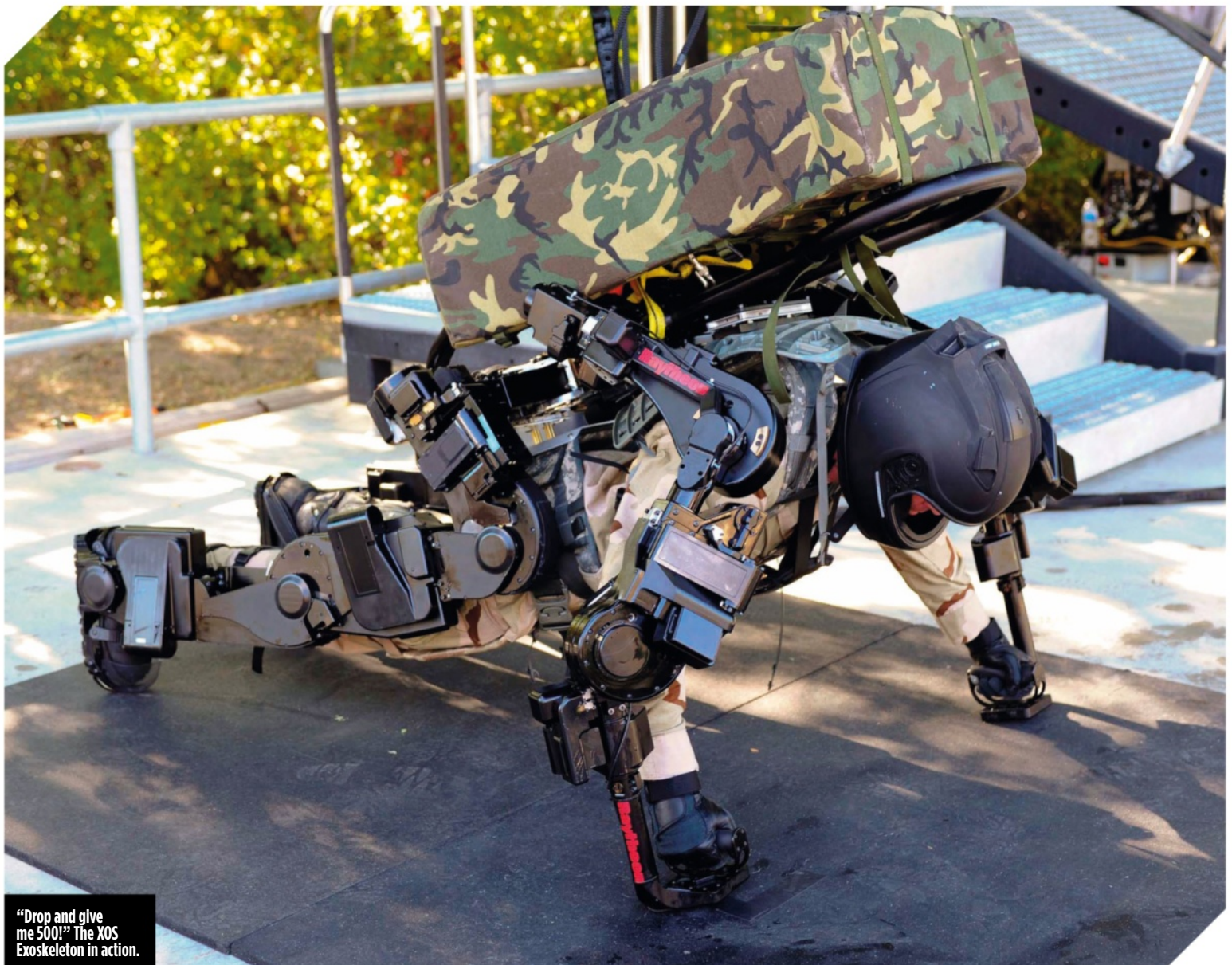
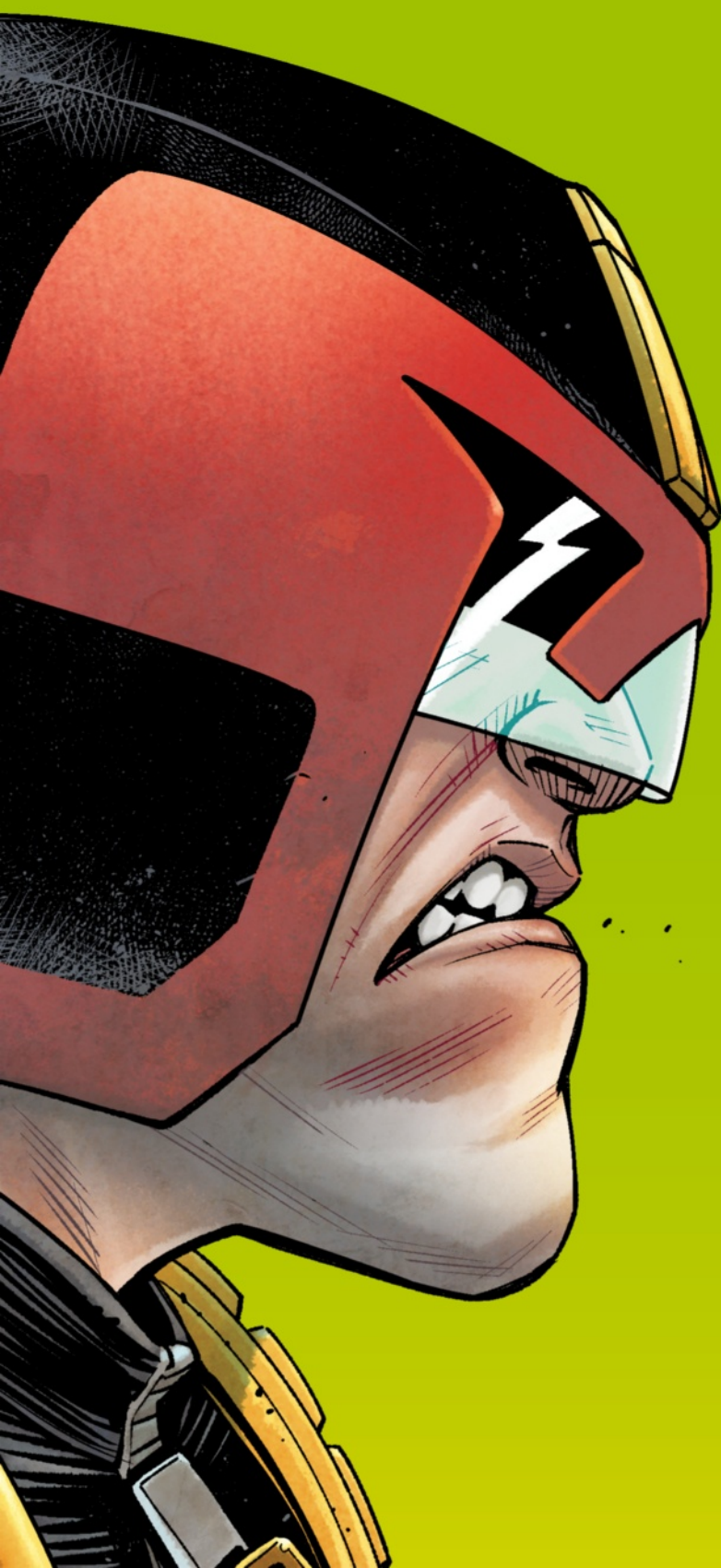


IMAGE: RAYTHEON

“Drop and give me 500!” The XOS Exoskeleton in action.

DREDD VS

RoboCop has a famous forebear in Judge Dredd. **Michael Molcher** looks at the influence Ol' Stoney Face had on Murphy...



Come quietly, or there will be... trouble!" It's one of the most famous catchphrases in modern cinema and enough to strike terror into any criminal's heart. But rather than the streets of near-future Detroit it was first spoken in an irradiated desert in the 22nd Century...

Surrounded by guns and seemingly outnumbered, Judge Dredd stands on the cover to *2000 AD* Prog 69 from 1978, coolly threatening his attackers with virtually the same words cyborg policeman RoboCop would utter some eight years later.

With their decaying urban settings, extreme violence, deadpan humour, and satire on American society, Judge Dredd and *RoboCop*

they are both liberal nightmares about faceless fascism as well as a lampooning of unbridled modern consumerism, whether it's Otto Sump's "ugly" products or OCP's privatisation of every part of life.

Having been a fan during his time marketing the original *Star Wars* film in the UK, producer Charles M Lippincott tried to option the rights to Judge Dredd in 1980. Initially hearing nothing back from publishers IPC, he eventually secured the rights in 1983, for a hefty fee and after a year of negotiations. According to former development executive Susan Nicoletti he immediately began trying to develop his own screenplay.

Two years later, the pair of them were canvassing opinions from various writers when they began

// "THEY ARE BOTH NIGHTMARES ABOUT FACELESS FACISM"

have much in common – but could the similarities between the comic and the movie be more than coincidence?

In fact, but for a twist of fate and some poor timing, could it have been *Dredd*, not *RoboCop*, that became one of the defining movies of the '80s?

RoboCop has been called "the greatest comic book film adapted from a comic book that never was" thanks to its larger-than-life characters and almost cartoon-like violence set amidst the ruins of a rabidly capitalist society. By 1987, Judge Dredd had already been handing out summary justice in the vast, crowded dystopia of Mega-City One for a decade, punishing even the smallest of crimes with severe sentences and handing out cool one-liners like bullets.

With their faces half-hidden by helmets and shoot first policies,

talking to Edward Neumeier, who was not only a Dredd fan but had previously tried to get the very option they now held.

"Charley was in Ed's office and saw either Dredd comic books or Dredd posters," she said in *The Making Of Judge Dredd*, "and it turned out that Ed had tried to buy the rights but couldn't because, you know, we had them."

ROBO WINS THE RACE

It was around this time that work began on *RoboCop* with director Paul Verhoeven working on Neumeier and co-writer Michael Miner's script. When the film premiered in 1987, it became an instant classic. But the similarities were not lost on those who'd been working to bring Judge Dredd to the screen, and who knew that *RoboCop*'s success made it more

ROBOCOP

unlikely their project would find backing from a fickle movie industry.

In the same account, Nicoletti recalled a meeting with an embarrassed Jon Davison, one of *RoboCop*'s producers, following a preview screening she and Lippincott had managed to sneak into: "He looked at me apologetically and he just shrugged and said, 'It's Judge Dredd, isn't it?' and Charley's standing next to me, nodding."

Dredd producer Ed Pressman also remembers having been at the preview: "It was a demoralising experience because we realised how much had been taken from Dredd.

feature, an early sculpt of Bottin's design flashes up on screen and while the hefty shoulder pads are missing, the helmet, face and chin are unmistakably Dredd's.

The timing and Neumeier's earlier attempts to secure the rights from IPC have led some to suggest that *RoboCop* may actually started life as a *Dredd* film. The evidence is circumstantial. While he was a fan of the comics, Neumeier has also regularly cited influences as disparate as *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, *The Terminator* and *Frankenstein*. And despite Bottin's Dredd sculpture, *RoboCop*'s suit

// "THERE WAS CLEARLY A THIRST FOR ANTI-HEROES"

It made our ability to move ahead somewhat more difficult. What we were selling didn't seem as fresh as it had before. From then on it was essential that we say to every writer and director that we talked to that it can't be too much like *RoboCop*."

JUDGING THE JUDGE

Following the setback it was a further eight years of development hell before Dredd finally made it to the big screen in 1995 courtesy of British director Danny Cannon and star Sylvester Stallone. But the moment had passed. Shorn of its satirical edge and sanitised to capture the PG13 demographic, the film not only bore little resemblance to the comic but felt tired, bloated, and out of its time. It was to have a lasting effect on the comics, scuppering any further adaptations until 2012's gritty reboot starring Karl Urban.

But how much did *RoboCop* draw on Dredd for inspiration?

In a 2002 interview with Dutch website *XI Online*, Verhoeven admitted that *RoboCop*, his first major American film, was at least partially inspired by Dredd and in the "making of" feature on the *RoboCop* DVD, Davison even admits that *RoboCop* initially looked like Dredd during FX artist Rob Bottin's development of the suit in 1986 – merely a year after Neumeier had first met with Lippincott. During the

borrows just as heavily from sources such as Japanese comic *The 8 Man*, TV show *Space Sheriff Gavan*, and Marvel Comics superhero ROM – a man who, like Alex Murphy, has his brain transplanted into a robotic suit (the latter's inspiration clear from the appearance of *ROM* comic books twice during the course of the movie, once during the convenience store robbery and again in a flashback of Murphy's son).

And with comics such as Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg*, and Pat Mills' *Marshal Law*, and films like *Brazil* and *The Terminator*, there was clearly already a thirst in the 1980s for anti-heroes, dystopia and dark satire. These elements were not unique to *RoboCop* but the closeness to Judge Dredd and his world made it then impossible for the comic character to come to the movies and tread the same ground.

It's notable how the original *RoboCop* screenplay hits many of the same notes found in the early Dredd strips. If Lippincott had not already secured the rights to the character, could Edward Neumeier have ended up making the ultimate '80s *Judge Dredd* film? In the end, regardless of who influenced who, it came down to who reached the box office quickest and, unfortunately for Joe Dredd, *RoboCop* did it first and did it best.

• With thanks to Tony Hudson



THE CLONE VS THE CYBORG

They're both lawmen of the future, but just how similar to each other are Judge Dredd and RoboCop really? Let's take a look...

THE MEN

A clone of the legendary "father of justice" Eustace Fargo, Judge Joseph Dredd is now pushing 70. That doesn't stop him from continuing a gruelling routine of daily armed and unarmed combat. His uniform is comprised of skin-tight biker's leathers incorporating protective pads on his shoulders, elbows and knees while his belt pouches contain everything from handcuffs and stun gas to a "Birdie" hand-held lie detector. Due to repeated major injuries, a significant number of Dredd's bones are now artificial. After losing his eyes, he was given bionic replacements that provide him with 20/20 zoom vision and vastly reduced blinking time.



Alex J Murphy was a loyal, tough and well-liked member of the Detroit police department until he suffered massive physical trauma at the hands of Clarence Boddicker and his gang, and was left for dead. OCP technicians performed a revolutionary "total body prosthesis" whereby his face and portions of his cerebrum and cerebellum were integrated into a cybernetic body, and he was reborn as RoboCop. His exoskeleton, made from titanium laminated with Kevlar, is fire proof and capable of sustaining major damage from armour piercing and explosive rounds, as well as major impacts from falls or vehicle collisions.

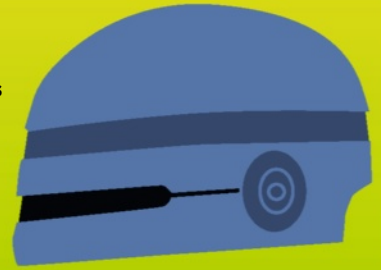


THE HELMETS

The Justice Department standard headwear is both a protective helmet and, since it hides half of a Judge's face, part of their psychological arsenal. The forehead-mounted shield can be pulled down for use as a respirator breathing apparatus and the helmets are sometimes depicted with retractable microphone and internal HUD providing all-round vision.



Although it has a removable faceplate RoboCop's helmet is integrated into his main systems, giving him zoom capability and heat vision, as well as a playback recorder to collect evidence. His vision is connected directly to his targeting capability, which also gives him the ability to calculate bullet trajectory accurately. As with Dredd, part of Murphy's face is still visible.



THE BOOTS

Dredd wears standard Justice Department motorbike boots with reinforced steel toecaps. His right boot has a side holster in which he stores his Lawgiver, providing easy access to his weapon when seated on a Lawmaster, while the left boot includes a sheath for a knife. Dredd likes to wear them a size too tight, to keep him on edge.



RoboCop doesn't technically wear boots. His legs and feet are actually an integrated part of his cyborg body. His right leg does, however, contain a hidden mechanical thigh holster from which he can quickly deploy his Auto-9 gun for when a spot of instant justice is required. Which is more often than not, frankly...



THE WEAPONS

The Lawgiver can fire six different types of ammunition: Standard; Hi-Ex; Armour Piercing; Incendiary; Heatseeker; and Ricochet - as single shot or automatic fire. Palm-print recognition means it will explode if fired by an unauthorised person. Originally a slender handgun, the Lawgiver Mk 2 now resembles a chunky submachine gun with a single bottom-loading ammo cartridge. Judges can also deploy a daystick truncheon and the fully automatic Widowmaker 2000 shotgun.



The Auto-9 is a 9mm handgun - a heavily-modified Beretta m93R machine pistol with long barrel. It is capable of firing in three- or seven-round bursts, or in fully automatic mode, from a huge 50-round magazine. Later on it was modified so that only RoboCop could fire it and it could shoot different types of ammunition.



THE TRANSPORT

The Lawmaster is a chopper-style motorbike with thick tyres, onboard computer, auto-aiming twin "bike cannon" machine guns, and turbo-boost capability (which enables it to leap great distances). Earlier models have a "Cyclops" laser mounted on their front.



The Detroit PD's standard vehicle is the sturdy 1985 Ford Taurus, fitted with a lighted pushbar, roof-mounted spotlight, onboard computer, and dashboard arsenal. Retro.



THE CATCHPHRASES

"I am the law, creep!"

"Dead or alive, you're coming with me!"

THE CRIMINALS

Aside from normal criminal activity, Dredd has dealt with characters such as head-butting maniac Mean Machine Angel, delinquent skysurfer Chopper, mad Chief Judge Cal, mass-murdering teenager PJ Maybe, and alien superfiend Judge Death - as well as leading guerrilla movements against Soviet invaders and rogue Judges.



After tackling Clarence Boddicker's gang, whose attack led him to become RoboCop in the first place, Murphy has taken on corrupt officials at OCP, drug cartels, the rival ED-209 droids and his replacement, Cain/RoboCop 2.



THE DUTIES

Judges patrol alone or in pairs, unless called upon to perform urban pacification and riot control. They work shifts stretching over many days, punctuated by ten minutes of hyper-accelerated rest in specialised Sleep Machines and eating K Rations from the store on their Lawmasters. Judge Dredd mostly patrols on his own, though he has regularly teamed up with psychic Judge Cassandra Anderson from Psi Division.



Although capable of operating on his own as a crime prevention unit, RoboCop usually works with his former partner, Officer Anne Lewis. His systems require downtime for diagnostics as well as basic repairs and power source recharging. He is fed with a rudimentary "baby food" paste that sustains his organic systems.



THE LAW

Dredd enforces the strict penal code of Mega-City One, intended to keep order in such an overcrowded city. Minor crimes are punished with vastly disproportionate sentences, either with solitary confinement in huge blocks of Iso-Cubes or summary execution.

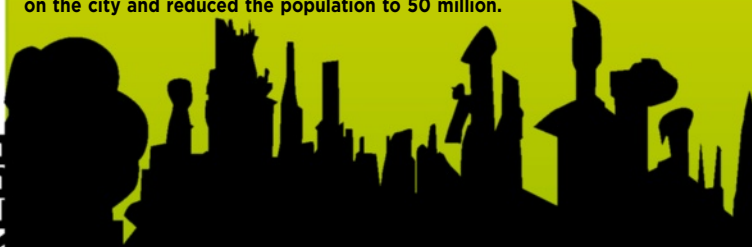


Aside from the laws of the city, RoboCop follows four Prime Directives: serve the public trust, protect the innocent, uphold the law, and a fourth which is later revealed to make him incapable of placing any senior OCP employee under arrest.



THE CITIES

Mega-City One: Following the Atomic Wars of the 2070s humanity retreated into Mega-Cities. With 95% unemployment, citizens are crammed into vast, crime-ridden blocks. Once home to 800 million people and running down the American east coast from Canada to Florida, war and disaster have recently taken their toll on the city and reduced the population to 50 million.



Detroit: An '80s vision of American dystopia full of decrepit heavy industry, poverty, and crime alongside gleaming skyscrapers and sharp suits. The bankrupt city has handed over running of its police department to mega-corporation Omni Consumer Products, which aims to replace the city with a planned municipality run by fully-privatised services.



A full-page background image of RoboCop standing in a futuristic city at night. He is wearing his iconic silver armor and helmet, holding a plasma pistol in his right hand. The city features tall, colorful buildings and a street with some debris. The overall tone is dark and cinematic.

DELTA CITY
THE FUTURE HAS A
SILVER LINING.

ROBOCOP

THE LEGEND BEGINS

It was the absurdly violent action movie that won over the critics and became a science fiction classic. **Stephen Kelly** looks back at how it all happened

The year is 1981, and Edward Neumeier is working as a story analyst for Columbia Pictures. He doesn't want to be a story analyst for Columbia Pictures, however. He wants to write his own action script, probably something in the science fiction genre.

His office at Columbia neighbours the shared backlot set of another studio, Warner Bros. One night, working late, Neumeier strolls on down to this backlot to investigate the making of a film that he soon finds out is called *Blade Runner*. It's about robots, apparently, although the actors – Sean Young, especially – don't look much like robots to him. So later that night, he invents his own one.

"About three in the morning, I was sitting there looking at one of those spinner cars," he says. "As a young man, of course, I liked that car a lot. And I suddenly had this real image of a robot – blue, probably because that car was blue – who was standing next to that car, looking at all the weird people on that [set] and wondering why people did the things they did. And the title and the character name sprung to mind in a way that, I must say, has never happened to me before or since."

That title and character was *RoboCop*: a film that, upon its release six years later, would go on to be one of the most influential to emerge from '80s cinema; a science fiction film whose sharp, satirical story of dystopian capitalism would be boldly brought to life by a vision as distinctively violent as it was wry. Over-usage may have drained the word of its power over the years, but *RoboCop* genuinely is a "classic".

But first, of course, the damn thing had to be written...

ROBO-NOMICS

The roots of *RoboCop*'s social commentary are timely – although sadly not dated.

From his RoboEpithany in '81, Neumeier went on to become an executive at Universal, where he would turn down a vice president position to focus on fleshing out his screenplay with friend and ambitious young cinematographer Michael Miner. It was the time of Ronald Reagan, whose "Reaganomics" policy of making the rich richer – ie, cutting tax for corporations – purported itself under the ideology that the profits would "trickle down" to the masses and stimulate growth. Growth was stimulated but the masses saw precious little of the benefits.

Like in *RoboCop*'s grim vision of a future Detroit, there was a boom in public services

EVIDENCE BOX

ROBOCOP

YEAR OF RELEASE:

1987

DIRECTOR:

PAUL VERHOEVEN

SCRIPT BY:

EDWARD NEUMEIER,

MICHAEL MINER

STARRING:

PETER WELLER, ALEX

MURPHY/ROBOCOP,

NANCY ALLEN (ANNE

LEWIS), RONNY COX

(OCP SENIOR PRESI-

DENT DICK JONES),

KURTWOOD SMITH

(CLARENCE BOO-

DICKER), MIGUEL FER-

RER (OCP EXECUTIVE

ROBERT 'BOB' MOR-

TONI), DAN OHERLIHY

(OCP CHAIRMAN 'THE

OLD MAN')

US BOX-OFFICE:

\$53,424,681

being outsourced to private companies. Luckily, this didn't extend to a privatised police force. Yet *RoboCop*'s depiction of Omni Consumer Products' profit-before-people approach to law-enforcement is an extreme satirisation of a stark reality.

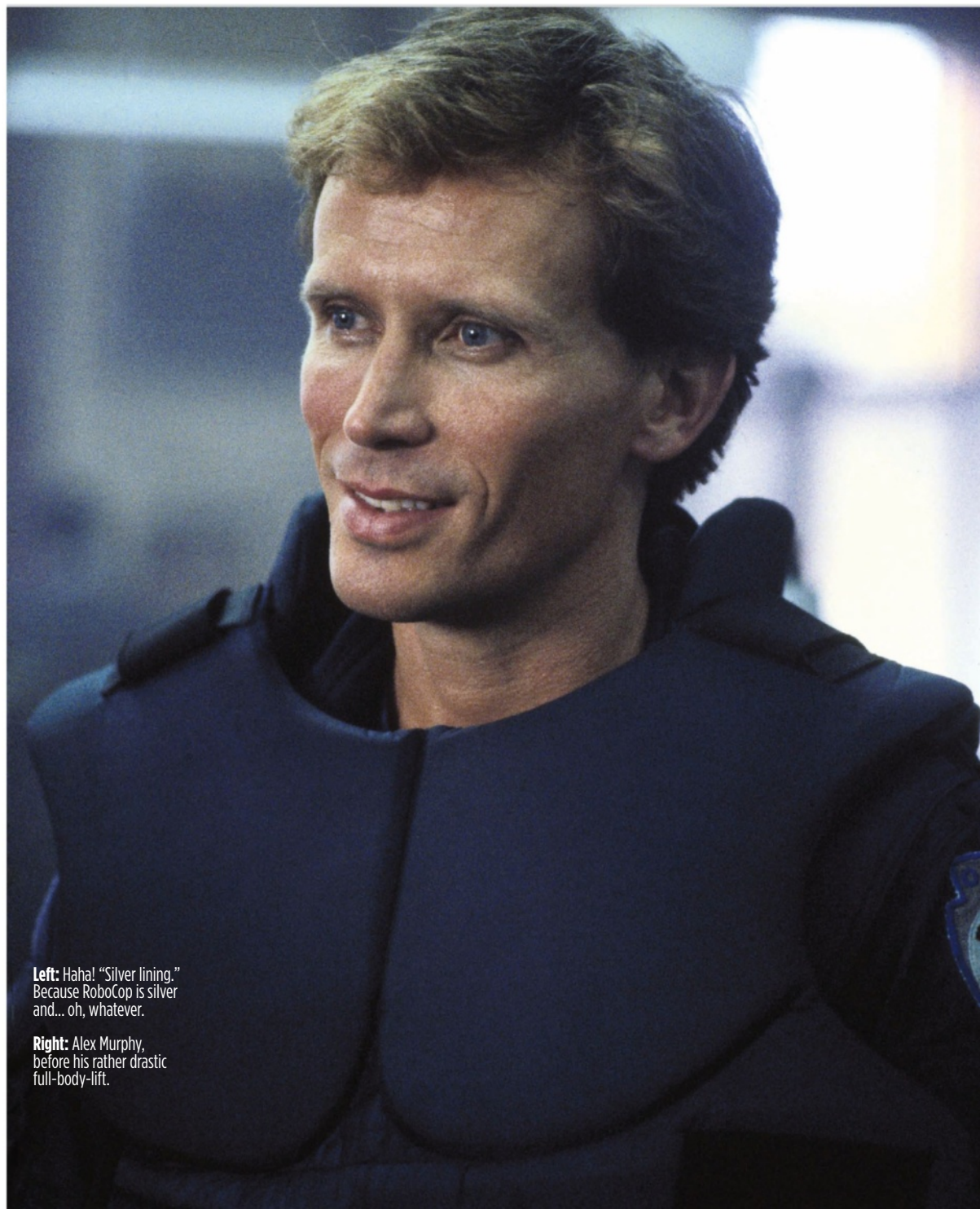
For combined with government cuts to the public sector, urban areas were also devastated by private companies that had very little interest in services that didn't pull in a profit. As *RoboCop*'s news reports reminded us, the gap between rich and poor widened, and unemployment rose. Echoing the same, heartless rhetoric that had flowed through the film years earlier, Reagan told the *New York Times* during his final weeks of presidency that the homeless "make it their own choice for staying out there."

"I had this idea that an action movie could also be a political satire of sorts," Neumeier once said. "I was interested in the guile of capitalism. In the film, it's mostly peppered in through the 'media

breaks'. The most absurd commercial is the one for the *Nuke 'Em!* board game [in which children are encouraged to 'nuke' enemy countries in a pastiche of right-wing jingoism]. It's absolutely hilarious."

With Detroit as his script's location (chosen because of the devastating collapse of its motor industry in the '70s), Neumeier would articulate these themes through a hero who would not only mirror the ridiculous violence of cinema cops such as "Dirty" Harry Callahan, but of capitalism's indifference to personal cost. As Peter Weller says: "The most human character in the story is the one who physically, emotionally, psychologically, has been pillaged in the name of progress. Pillaged in the name of progress! You can see why the Third World countries that were buying this thing were so fascinated about the theme of being pillaged by technology."

Indeed, beyond the obvious thematics, the character of *RoboCop* would end up



Left: Haha! "Silver lining." Because RoboCop is silver and... oh, whatever.

Right: Alex Murphy, before his rather drastic full-body-lift.

// "ROBOCOP
BECAME
ONE OF THE
MOST INFLUENTIAL
FILMS OF THE '80S"



being one of existential layers. What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be alive? And at what point do you cease to be either? It would take another person, however, to go even further and ask, "Is RoboCop the American Jesus?"

FINDING THE RIGHT DIRECTOR

Many directors were mooted after Neumeier and Miner sold their screenplay to Orion Pictures. Although, as Neumeier

Above: Well, we suppose that's one way to deal with noisy neighbours...

Opposite: Good to see that even after death Murphy can still crack a smile.

attests, pre-production passion for the project was low.

"Lewis Teague said no and did 1985's *The Jewel Of The Nile* instead," he explains. "Thom Eberhardt (1984's *Night Of The Comet*) came in. Amy Holden Jones wrote up some notes about how she'd fix it. There were a couple guys who wanted to do it, like Jim McBride, but they were prevented by other pending deals. I'm sure Orion offered it to many of the directors that they were working with at that time. I presume many of them stopped at the title. For a moment it looked like we weren't going to be able to get a director... and then Verhoeven called."

At the time, Dutch director Paul Verhoeven had made several films in his native Netherlands (including the critically acclaimed *Soldier Of Orange*) but moved to America in the hopes of breaking Hollywood after English-speaking debut *Flesh And Blood*, starring Rutger Hauer. Just like all the others, however, he discarded the *RoboCop* script in disgust.

"The criticism to do with the Reaganomics of that time were, as I was just arrived from Europe, not something that I was very familiar with..." he explains. "I threw it away because I thought it was so child-like and infantile. And it was only when my wife started to read it and said, 'You should read it again, because there's a lot of extra layers there that you neglected - it might not be what you think.' And so I read it again... and again. And I started to realise what really had been written, or could be seen, in the script. It was vaguely

// "NEUMEIER AND MINER SOLD THE *ROBOCOP* SCRIPT, BUT PASSION FOR IT WAS LOW"

phrased, but not accentuated. And I think, what I do in a case like that, is to push those elements I see in a script - that is hyper-realism - to push that even beyond the intentions of the scriptwriter."

And he did. Few other directors - perhaps none, judging by *RoboCop*'s sequels - could have so wonderfully "got" the tricky balance of politics, violence and humour Neumeier and Miner were trying to convey.

Take the scene in which OCP unveils the ED-209 to its board, only for the new, crime-fighting robot to malfunction and shoot a screaming board-member to death. Not too serious to be tasteless, but not too silly to make a point about corporate culture, it's the sort of hilariously dark swipe at the overly-masculine, po-faced gore of films such as *Dirty Harry* that would go on to define Verhoeven's career. Here was an outsider who understood the absurd beauty of violence; the only sort of director, really, that could have made *RoboCop* work.

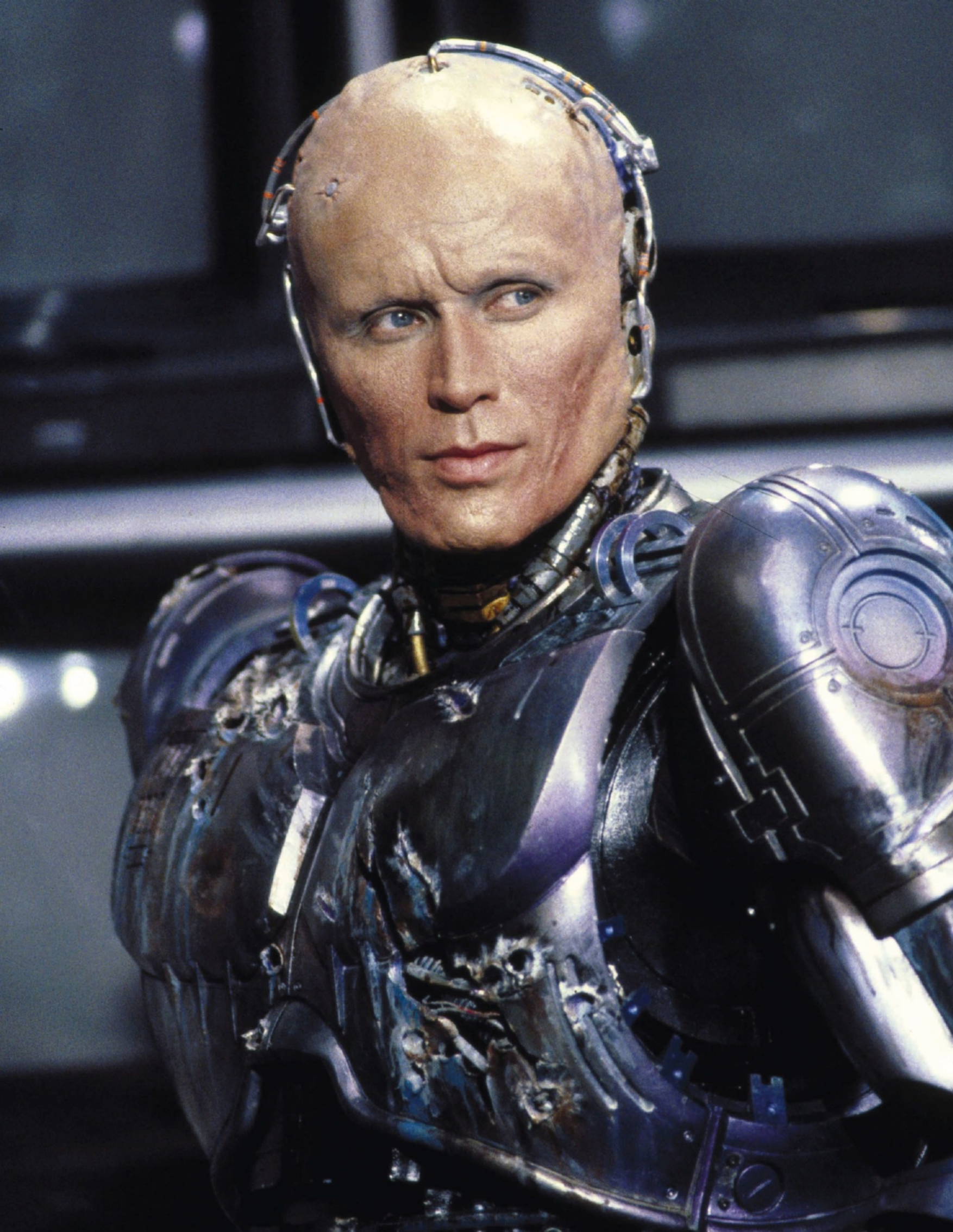
"I think there was an anthropological notion of someone from another culture

ROBOPROP

As Peter Weller knows all too well, being RoboCop isn't easy. For not only is it a performance dependent on the lower face, but it also involves the wearing of a suit so heavy that - initially - Weller could hardly move.

"He appeared with the costume, and I laughed, because he did indeed look like a huge toad," says Moni Yakim, who was charged with retraining Weller to move while wearing the RoboCop suit. "I worked with Peter and found out that it was all in the rhythm, that we had to throw away all the preparation that we'd done, rhythmically, over the four months, and to create the rhythm that would fit that costume. That, instead of having the bulk as a negative thing, to use it as an asset. So we started to move slower, and to walk slower, the motions were slower. And we worked Peter's body into the weight of the costume, rhythmically."

Weller adds, "It was so intense, that experience, of putting on that suit - particularly doing the face, which took six-and-a-half hours... I would meditate while they put on that mask, because that was the only way to get through that. To sit in a chair for six-and-a-half hours while somebody's messing around with your face? Try that sometime. You'd stab somebody with a fork if you don't find some kind of meditative process. By the third hour you're gonna kill someone."



WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

A selection of reviews from the film's release in 1987...

"If it's violence you're after, *RoboCop* gives full value. In his first American movie, Paul Verhoeven, a Dutch director (*Soldier Of Orange*), doesn't let the furiously futuristic plot get in the way of the flaming explosions, shattering glass and hurtling bodies." *New York Times Magazine*

"You feel as if you're watching an old story disguised in sci-fi hardware - and you are. Weller is the tragic hero looking for redemption." *Washington Post*

"*RoboCop* is a comic book movie that's definitely not for kids. The welding of extreme violence with four-letter words is tempered with gut-level humor and technical wizardry... *RoboCop* is as tightly worked as a film can be." *Variety*

"Weller does an impressive job of creating sympathy for his character. He is more 'human,' indeed, when he is a robocop than earlier in the movie, when he's an ordinary human being... Most thriller and special effects movies come right off the assembly line. You can call out every development in advance, and usually be right. *RoboCop* is a thriller with a difference." *Roger Ebert*

// // "ONE THING THAT
WASN'T ORIGINALLY
IN THE SCRIPT WAS A
THEME OF RESURRECTION"

looking at America, and I think this is essentially kind of an older story, which is the filmmakers who grow up someplace else looking at the American film business as this high aesthetic form that they aspire to," says Neumeier.

"I mean, Paul would say that he was a darling in America as a European director, but what he would say is, 'All I wanted to do was make American-style, plot-driven films,' and he was actually kind of unpopular in Holland as kind of a commercial [director], overly interested in the commercial form. But Paul had been in the movie business long enough to know that very often you would write a script and then be surprised by what you saw on the screen, as a writer. Now, I actually was a producer on the picture, too, so I was there for the whole time, but I do remember one day thinking, before the movie even came out, 'This is the script. This is everything I ever wrote. This is everything I could have hoped for in terms of execution.'"

One thing that wasn't in the original script, however, was a theme of Verhoeven's own: resurrection. Compounding existential themes that would have the likes of Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek analysing a hero "caught between two deaths" years later, the director decided to bring the pages to life with a sprinkle of religious imagery.

During his execution by Boddicker's gang, Murphy's hands are spread out, before bullets tear holes in them. Later, we see RoboCop make water turn red like wine, when he finally defeats and kills Boddicker.

"You could see him as a Jesus,"

Verhoeven confirms, "but I always called him an American Jesus. In the scene at the end where at first he arrests the bad guy, Clarence Boddicker, but then he gets on the streets again and they meet again in the steel factory in Pittsburgh... RoboCop, who is at that point walking over the water, basically, like Jesus, of course, is aiming the gun at Clarence, and states his line: 'I'm not arresting you anymore.' He's saying, 'I will kill you.' And, basically, that's why I'm calling him the American Jesus. Ironically, perhaps, but that is an element, let's say, of the way Christianity is often interpreted in the United States."



NICE SHOOTING, SON

Following little buzz and eleven cuts to get the MPAA to rate it an R rather than a dreaded X, *RoboCop* was released on 17 July 1987. Anarchic and rebellious, it was like nothing cinema had ever seen before – especially in a time of straight-faced science fiction such as *Blade Runner*, *Aliens* and *The Terminator*. Science fiction could be smart as well as silly, violent as well as thought-provoking, political as well as entertaining.

It did well, financially, in what was the year of *Lethal Weapon*, *Fatal Attraction* and *Three Men And A Baby*. Yet its success is far more than that; it's the enduring legacy, and the fact that – in terms of subversive cinema – it has never been bettered.

For the inspirations behind *RoboCop*'s themes were timely, yes, but they have also gone on to be timeless. Ed Neumeier, Michael Miner and Paul Verhoeven

concocted a grotesque, ridiculous future of capitalism that we are now closer to than we have ever been before; of policies and attitudes that sadly didn't die with the end of Reagan's presidency.

If anything, we need *RoboCop* more today than we ever have.

"Look, I did the press for the triple-DVD for Warner Brothers about eight years ago," Peter Weller explains. "I sat in a Warner Brothers office in London for a week thinking I was going to get these dreary questions about how much the suit weighed. Well, this was for the worldwide release of this DVD, and subsequently all I got for five days, on phoners and live interviews – especially with the Third World countries – was, 'What this film represents, thematically, is the way that technology in the hands of the wealthy West – what they called, in Renaissance

Italy, the Grande, the people with money – is dominating and subsuming the Third World.' Problems concerning, essentially, progress looting the goods and services of the Third World and leaving them a pittance. That's all they asked me about, and I never thought about the movie in terms of that until those interviews.

"So, to look back on it, I can see that Paul had that in there all the time, that the Western world, symbolised by America but not only America – the entire West – as a Pac-Man of greed using cutting edge technology to subsume, take over, and dominate the world, vis-à-vis that technology. If you take that alone, and you take the theme of resurrection, that is why, I say, I argue, the film has no shelf-life. It is anthropological. You can look at the film in 200 years and see what America was about in the end of the 20th Century." ●

Left: "Pucker up and come to daddy, you sexy mothercrusher..."

Below: Every sharp-suited executive needs his own pet enforcement droid.



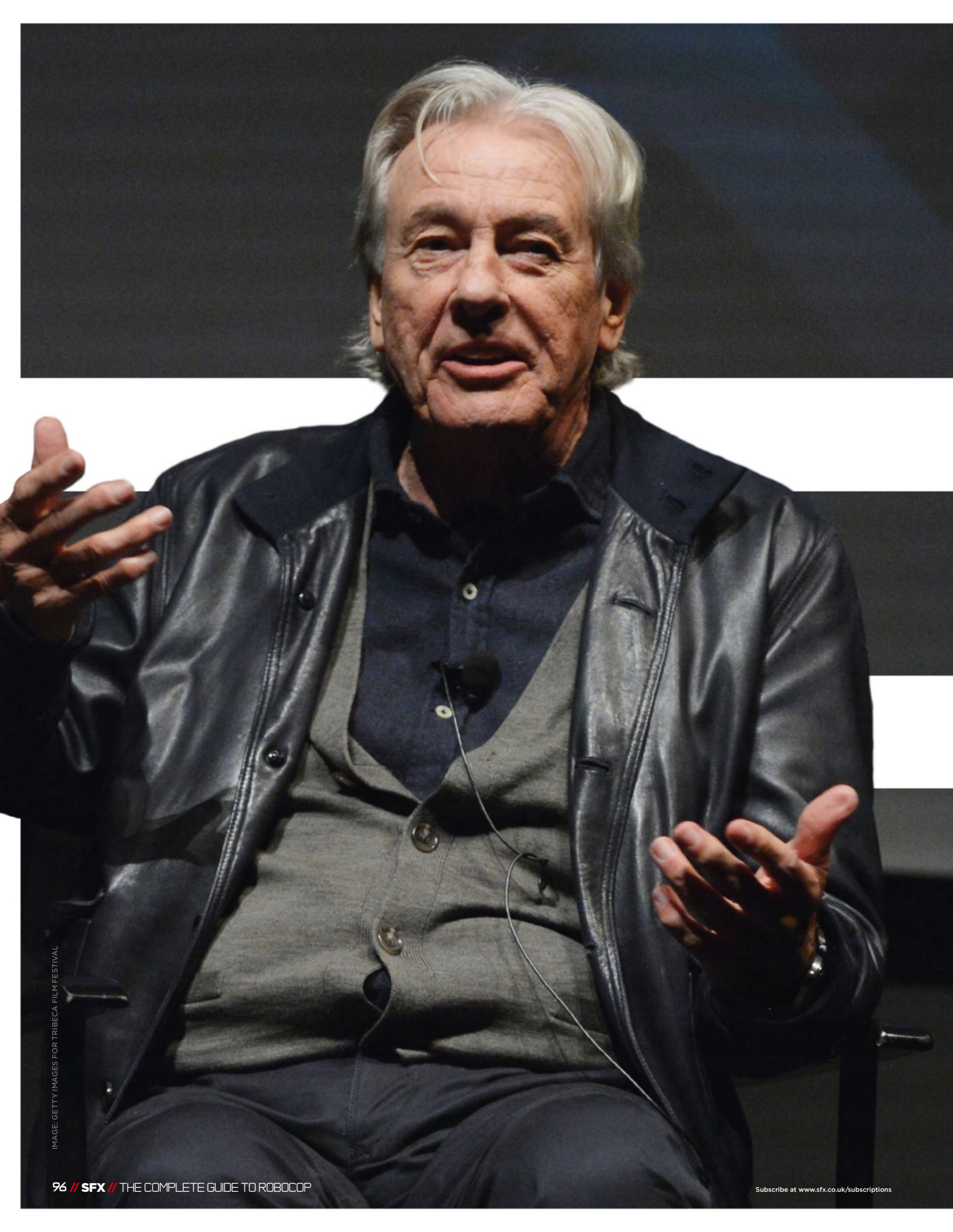


IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES FOR TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

TOTALLY RECALLING ROBOCOP

Paul Verhoeven, the director of the original *RoboCop*, speaks to **Calum Waddell** about his relationship with the mechanical lawman...

Having made a name for himself in his native Holland with such critically acclaimed arthouse classics as the World War II drama *Soldier Of Orange* (1977), the sexually provocative *Spetters* (1980) and the giallo-esque thriller *The Fourth Man* (1983), Paul Verhoeven may have seemed like an unlikely proposition to helm a series of mega-budgeted Hollywood blockbusters. However, following his first English language movie – the period-set swashbuckler *Flesh+Blood* (1985) – the filmmaker made a fluid transition into mainstream sci-fi cinema with *RoboCop* and the rest, as they say, is history. Yet, speaking to *SFX* in an exclusive interview, Verhoeven admits his hesitance about leaping into a genre that he was initially unenthusiastic about – a remarkable revelation considering that the great man's later projects include *Total Recall* (1990), *Starship Troopers* (1997) and *Hollow Man* (2000).

"Sure, I had seen stuff like *Star Wars*," he chuckles when *SFX* calls him at home in Los Angeles. "But I honestly never thought I would ever make that kind of film..."

Thankfully, with *RoboCop*, he found a metal-muse that proved too riotous to resist...

SFX: Let's start at the very beginning – is it true that you were hesitant to get involved with *RoboCop* because you were not a fan of science fiction?

Paul Verhoeven: "Yes that is true. When I got the *RoboCop* script, I was not a sci-fi movie fan at all. Here is the story behind *RoboCop*: I was living Holland at the time with my wife and family. I had been making movies out there – I had done seven films – and they were much more reality based than something like *RoboCop*. I had never considered doing anything that was set in a sci-fi world of the future or anything [laughs]."

SFX: Although the film you made previous to *RoboCop*, 1985's *Flesh+Blood*, has elements of fantasy to it...

PV: "*Flesh+Blood* was set in the medieval period and, okay, I guess you could argue that is, in a way, sort of like a fantasy story but it is still grounded in historical research. I also made the movie, *Keetje Tippel*, which is set in the past – the 1800s – but this all involved going ➤



"Sure, crime is up... But what's the worst that could happen?"

back and looking at real time periods. So with these films you had stories which were still based on some sort of reality. I do not consider that to be sci-fi or fantasy like *RoboCop* where you have to create a totally imaginary world."

SFX: Nevertheless, in the end, you did agree to make *RoboCop*. What was it that changed your mind?

PV: "Well, as everyone now seems to know, it was my wife who read it and advised me to give the script another look because, at first, I was totally against doing anything that was sci-fi. But it was also an experiment to get out of Holland. The financing for filmmakers had dried up and I wanted to see if I could have a career in America. But even after I was offered *RoboCop*, and I agreed to do it, I never bought a home in LA. I was uncertain over whether or not this

film was going to be a success. I went out to Hollywood and moved into a flat in LA – but I kept my house in Holland. I was still not sure how everything was going to go..."

SFX: Was there a "Eureka" moment – perhaps where you realised that *RoboCop* might actually be a huge success?

PV: "Yes, it was when I first met and spoke to the writers of *RoboCop* – Edward Neumeier and Michael Miner – and the producer Jon Davison. They really brought out my enthusiasm about this story. That was also when my old interest in comic books began to surface – because I was a big

comic book collector when I was a young boy – and I began to recapture some of my childhood love for sci-fi and fantasy. After that I got deeper and deeper into *RoboCop* and I started to find an approach that worked for me. That was when I realised we might be making something special."

SFX: Can you talk about finding the right actor for *RoboCop* with Peter Weller?

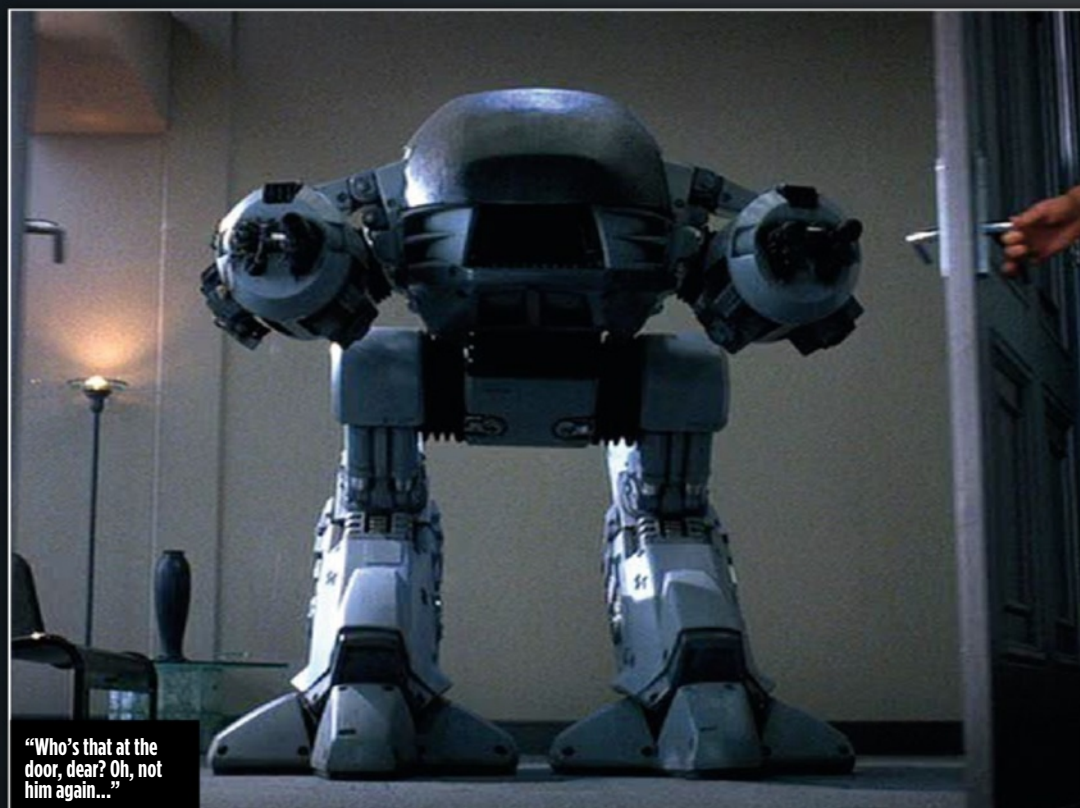
PV: "Okay so the biggest problem we had with casting the role was finding someone who could act with his chin. Think about it: after he becomes *RoboCop* you do not see his face until the last part of the film.

// "I WAS A BIG COMIC BOOK COLLECTOR WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY. I BEGAN TO RECAPTURE SOME OF MY LOVE FOR SCI-FI AND FANTASY"

CONAN'S COMEBACK?

Having returned to his art house roots with 2006's critically acclaimed drama *Black Book* and 2012's *Tricked*, rumours continue to abound that Verhoeven is planning another Hollywood epic; the sort of big budget blockbuster that made him an international "A-list" director. Whispers have even emerged that the filmmaker, who collaborated with Arnold Schwarzenegger on *Total Recall*, is due to partner with the Austrian oak on an updated *Conan The Barbarian*. Verhoeven, however, is happy to put such gossip into perspective...

"No my next project is not *Conan* with Arnold," he laughs. "That rumour came about because of some people from a muscle magazine. They saw me in a restaurant and we began speaking to one another. They mentioned Arnold was going to be making another *Conan* film. Then they said they were in touch with him and he had mentioned he would be interested in getting me to make it. I laughed and said, 'Ask Arnold to call me.' And that is how that rumour began. But I never heard from Arnold – so I don't think it was true [laughs]."



"Who's that at the door, dear? Oh, not him again..."



These boots are made for walkin' (over the faces of dead perps).

So his chin had to be there all the time. His performance was all in his chin [laughs]. With Peter Weller – I had seen him in some movies before *RoboCop*. So when his name came up I was enthusiastic about meeting with him. He was obviously a very good actor, with a good chin, and I felt he could pull off this role. Another reason we went with him is that, physically, we needed someone who looked like an average guy. Peter, although he was in great shape, did not stand out as a big muscle man or anything. He did not look superhuman."

SFX: What about the politics of *RoboCop*? The movie is one of the most fiercely political sci-fi films of the 1980s and I am

// "PETER WELLER – I HAD SEEN HIM IN MOVIES, SO I WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MEETING HIM. HE WAS A VERY GOOD ACTOR, WITH A GOOD CHIN"

curious to know if, as a European, any of that is down to you being an outsider "looking in" on the era of Reaganism and widescale privatisation?

PV: "No, I have to admit that the politics of *RoboCop* are all down to the script. Everything that touched on Reaganism was in the screenplay already. I had come from Holland where I had no idea about American politics except what I read in

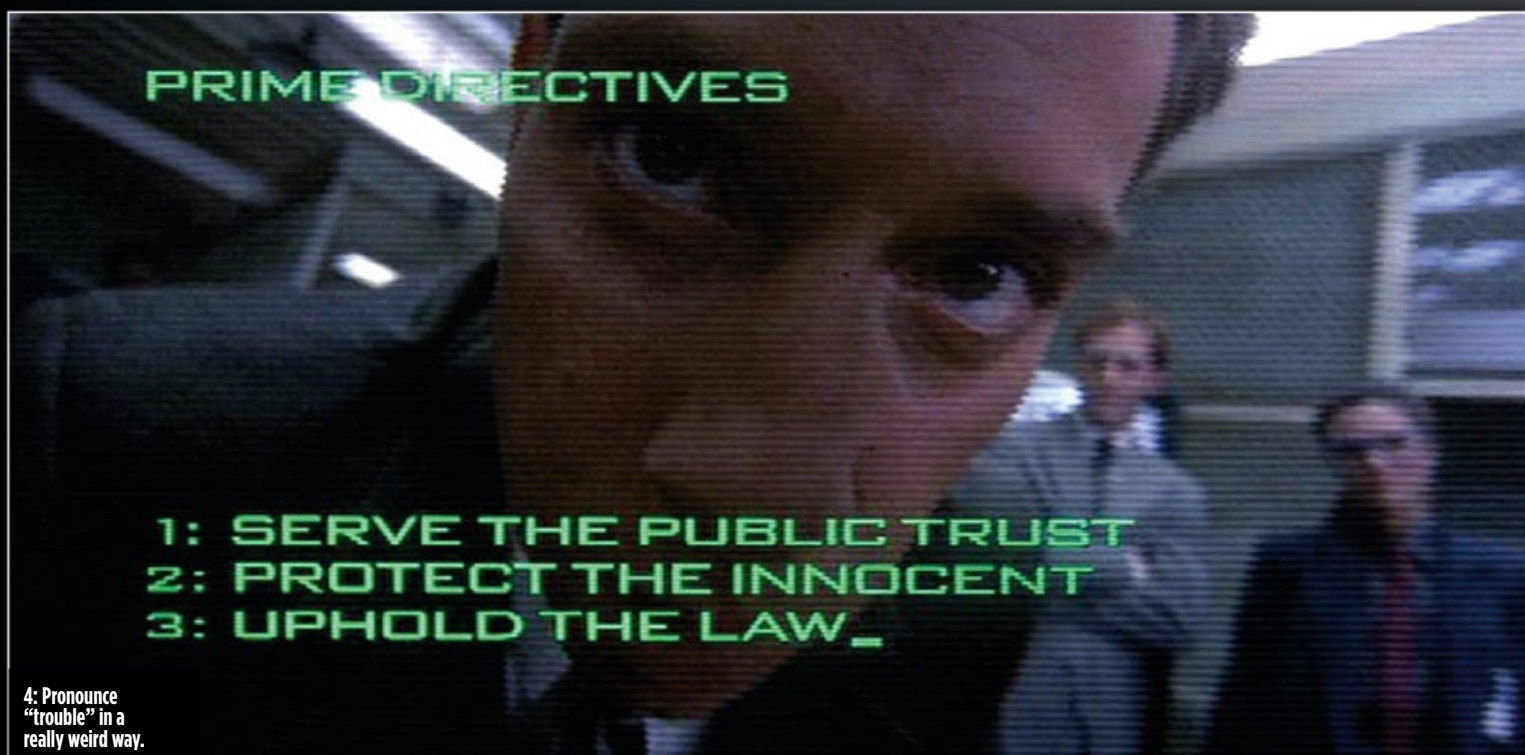
the newspapers; but that is always very superficial. The printed press only tells you little bits and pieces – and from their own standpoint – so you only read what they want you to read. All the privatisation stuff that is in *RoboCop* – like the OCP organisation – came from the writers. They were, of course, influenced by Reagan and his politics when they came up with *RoboCop*, and I was the person who



Not something that you want to see when you wake up...



Dick Jones. He certainly lives up to his first name.



// "I JUST DID WHAT I THOUGHT WAS NORMAL. SEX AND VIOLENCE ARE A BIG PART OF MY FILMS BECAUSE THEY'RE A PART OF SOCIETY"

brought that to the screen. However, once I saw where they were coming from, I did capitalise on that political element – and I pushed it – but it was already written down. It was difficult to miss the criticism of the USA coming from the pages of the *RoboCop* script. It was very evident. But it was not really until *Starship Troopers* that I got more politically involved. That film had ten times as much political input from me as *RoboCop* did."

SFX: Had you seen any of the recent sci-fi films that had been a big hit before you did *RoboCop*?

PV: "I had seen *The Terminator*, which was another Orion release, and I really liked that. I remember thinking, 'Yeah, this is innovative this is something new. This is doing something special with sci-fi cinema.' That was an important film for the genre."

SFX: How did you react to *RoboCop*'s release? The film was controversial, and it was also censored for its violent content in both America and the UK. This foreshadows, of course, the controversial career that you went on to have in the United States. Can you speak about this?

PV: "Well all of this was a big surprise to me at the time. You see, in Holland there is no censorship. We have abortion and euthanasia and we are a very liberal country. So when I was living and working in Holland I never thought of censorship – all of my movies were going to be released uncut and without any interference."

"I just did what I thought was normal and acceptable with *RoboCop*. Sex and violence are a big part of my films and that is because they are a normal part of society. If we do not have sex, for instance, our species is eliminated. And violence is also a part of

human behaviour – you cannot deny this. So, to me, the most visible things about our world are sex and violence and, of course, these are the things I want to explore in my work. But with *RoboCop* I am working in America and suddenly I am being told, 'Paul, children might see this film,' and 'You have to get an R-rating.' It took me a long time to secure that rating for *RoboCop* because the MPAA in America kept telling me to remove various moments of violence. I thought they were crazy..."

SFX: Presumably this was a very frustrating experience for you...

PV: "Absolutely. I hate having someone telling me what to shoot or what to cut out [laughs]. I had this with my other films too; not so much with *Total Recall*, but with *Basic Instinct* which went to the American censors eight or nine times. Then with *Showgirls* we went out in cinemas with the NC17 because we could not get an R-rating. But I think when we reduced the violence in *RoboCop* it actually made it worse [laughs]. When we toned it down, suddenly the violence seemed more serious. It was, I think, a little more comic book in the full



Panic in Detroit: Murphy and Lewis chase Boddicker.



You could always rely on Murphy to bring beers to the party.



THAT OTHER VERHOEVEN CONTROVERSY

After *RoboCop* proved to be a box office smash, Verhoeven was one of the hottest names in Hollywood. Subsequent projects such as *Total Recall* and *Basic Instinct* also provoked interest across the globe and it seemed as if the eccentric director could do no wrong. However, Verhoeven's time at the top was tripped up by 1995's sex farce *Showgirls* – one of the decade's most infamous flops. It won him a Razzie Award for Worst Director, which he accepted in-person – and, according to the filmmaker, critical reappraisal is decidedly overdue...

"I said that in 20 years people would see it in a different light," he admits. "At the time people were bothered by the sex and nudity. They looked at the boobs and then they made their conclusions. But I tell people now, 'You need to look at the faces as well – then you will understand the film. Divert your attention and look a little further up.'"

version. Thankfully, years later, Criterion in the United States put out my original cut of the film – and that is the only version of *RoboCop* that I approve of. That is the version that the MPAA originally gave an X to – because it was before the NC17 rating came in – and I needed to remove a few seconds of blood and violence to get us the R. Now, if you look at this version, I think it is so over the top that the violence is hard to take seriously. To me, what the MPAA did to the film was not very rational – and it was frustrating to go back and forward with them over that..."

SFX: After *RoboCop* you did *Total Recall* and then, a few years later, *Starship Troopers* and *Hollow Man*. Is it fair to say that, despite your initial reluctance over *RoboCop*, you became a sci-fi fan after making the movie?

PV: "Yes, that is very true. My big concern was actually becoming typecast. When you make a hit sci-fi film you tend to get offered only sci-fi after that – and you can see that example from several directors. But, thankfully, I got to do some other stuff after *RoboCop* and *Total Recall* – mainly

// "CRITERION PUT OUT MY ORIGINAL CUT OF ROBOCOP – AND THAT IS THE ONLY VERSION OF THE FILM THAT I APPROVE OF"

with *Basic Instinct*, which was a thriller, and *Showgirls*, which was its own thing [laughs]. But what was really seductive about the sci-fi genre for me was the collaborative element to it. It was an enormous pleasure working with Phil Tippett and Rob Bottin on *RoboCop*. They were like co-directors during the making of that movie – and that was an extremely pleasurable experience.

"On any other kind of movie, such as a thriller or a character piece, you are really on your own, or you collaborate a little with the writer and actors. But when you do a sci-fi film it is more like a string quartet. The creativity does not just come from the director – it also comes from the special effects people."

SFX: Finally, are you looking forward to seeing the *RoboCop* remake?

PV: "Yes, I am looking forward to seeing it. I am very curious to see if they keep some of the elements that made the original film a success.

"And I also want to do another sci-fi movie myself. Strangely, no one offers me them anymore – which is why you have not seen a new one from me in so long. But I want to do something that really changes the genre – like *RoboCop* did, or *The Terminator* or *The Matrix*. There has not been anything as fresh as those films in quite a long time now. I would love to do a sci-fi film which is psychological, philosophical, sociological and political... all of these things [laughs].

"I enjoyed *Avatar* and *Gravity* but these movies are not very deep. I want to see something like *RoboCop* again. I want to put the word out – I definitely intend to do this kind of film again."

"Your move, creep." "Dead
or alive you're coming with
me." "I'd buy that for a
dollar." "You have 20 seconds
to comply." "Dick, you're
fired." "Well, give the man a
hand." "Excuse me. I have to
go. Somewhere there is a crime
happening." "His memories
are admissible as evidence."
"He's a sweet old man. And he
means well. But he's not gonna
live forever." "Can you fly,
Bobby?" "They'll fix you.
They fix everything." "Serve
the public trust. Protect the
innocent. Uphold the law."
"You call this a glitch?!"
"That... thing... is a violent,
mechanical psychopath!"

ROBO Writer

Co-writer and co-producer of *RoboCop*, Edward Neumeier, looks back at his iconic creation and discusses the “Future of Law Enforcement” with **Calum Waddell**

Edward Neumeier openly admits that he had little idea of just how successful *RoboCop* was going to be. Even today, when speaking with the co-creator of the character, he reveals that he never thought he would be giving interviews about the movie over 25 years later (“who could have known?” he laughs). Yet, here we are in the 21st Century, with *RoboCop* about to reach an all-new generation of sci-fi fans thanks to a mega-budgeted reboot directed by José Padilha. In the wake of the cyborg cop’s return, dedicated Delta City followers will no doubt discuss and debate the machine-man’s place in contemporary pop culture. Is he just a rusty old relic of the ’80s or a shining example of how time-worn technology can be given a fresh spit-shine? Only time and box office returns will tell.

In the interim, *SFX* caught up with Neumeier – whose credits also include penning Paul Verhoeven’s 1997’s classic sci-fi satire *Starship Troopers* and 2004’s creature feature sequel *Anacondas: The Hunt For The Blood Orchid* – to ask him a few arresting questions of our own...

SFX: First of all, can you speak about how quickly *RoboCop* came to fruition after you came up with the story and started to put pen to paper?

Edward Neumeier: “It all took place in under four

years [laughs]. In retrospect, having never done it before, it was a miracle that it happened so fast. I began thinking about it in 1983. I was employed to read scripts at the time and *Blade Runner* had been shooting outside my office the previous year. That got me thinking and one day I just concluded, ‘What about if there was a story about a robot who is also a policeman?’ Then I met Michael Miner at Universal, by which time I was an executive, and I said to him, ‘I have this great idea for a movie...’ – you know, that old line [laughs] – and he had actually been thinking of something quite similar. So we wrote the first draft quite quickly and we turned it into some friends to read in 1985. It sold to Orion shortly after that. Jon Davison was the producer on the film – a brilliant one – and our toughest hurdle was finding a director.”

SFX: Did no one want to do it?

EN: “That is exactly it! No one wanted to do it [laughs]. When it was first offered to Paul Verhoeven he said, ‘No thanks!’ because he didn’t want to do a science fiction film. The rumour goes that his wife read it and made him take a look at it, and I have also been told that is what happened. In fact, once he finished reading it he got on a plane almost immediately and we were more or less on. But he wanted it to be more serious. He asked us to write another draft which removed all of the humour.”



SFX: He changed his mind, of course...

EN: "Right – and that is because I gave him some Judge Dredd comic books to read."

SFX: We were going to ask how big an influence Judge Dredd was on *RoboCop*...?

EN: "I was certainly aware of Judge Dredd. You see, everyone seemed to think *RoboCop* should be serious and I always argued, 'No, no – it has to be funny.' And Paul said, 'I don't know about that' – which is why we were asked to do another draft of the script. It is strange that he asked for that, because if you look at his films there is a lot of dark humour in there: *Soldier Of Orange*, for instance, which I really liked. So we came very close to having to rewrite it in a much more serious tone but Paul came back, after reading the Judge Dredd comic books, and said, 'Okay, nevermind, I get what you guys are trying to do now.'"

SFX: Can you talk about the metaphor of *RoboCop* as a Christ-like figure?

EN: "Sure. Miner and I were always aware that we were playing around with two metaphors – *Frankenstein* and the Christ story. Then we got hooked up with Verhoeven and he really understood that aspect of *RoboCop*. Now something that is important to stress is that Murphy dies and is brought back to life as RoboCop. But RoboCop is a new thing. It is a transformative movie. People seem to not understand that he is not Murphy anymore."

SFX: Right, because the sequels tend to treat *RoboCop* as a far more human character than the original movie...

EN: "Yeah, ever since the first film, starting with Frank Miller who did *RoboCop 2*, the approach has been, 'He's still Murphy'. But he's not – he's RoboCop. In the script, interestingly enough, he is only referred to as RoboCop. Except when he actually is Murphy – before he gets shot and mutilated. After that, though, he is only referred to as Robo. His last line in the script – as it's typed – it doesn't say 'Murphy says "Murphy";' it says, 'Robo says "Murphy"'. I know that might seem like a small detail but it is very important.



"Wow, so it wasn't just my legs that OCP replaced..."

Even as we were writing *RoboCop* some people wanted me to add some sort of twist at the end where we could make out that Murphy was going to go home again and that everything would be okay. Well, no, that is impossible. He has changed. The others who have come to *RoboCop* since us do not get that. All of the subsequent films go back to calling him Murphy. That, to me, is a shame because it is fun to be RoboCop and it is fun to play with the character from that perspective."

SFX: Let's talk a little about the politics of the film. Detroit was losing its car industry – *RoboCop*, of course, is about man being replaced by machine... Was this a

"RoboCop is a new thing. People don't understand that he is not Murphy"

deliberate reason for the setting the film in that city?

EN: "Yes, absolutely. I grew up with parents who were journalists so I was very alert to what was happening in this country. I had read a book called *The Reckoning* by David Halberstam whilst we were writing *RoboCop*. David is a great journalist of the Vietnam era – and when he wrote *The Reckoning* it was all about how Ford had lost its market share to Nissan and the effect that was having on jobs and on our own car industry. It is a really fabulous read, and that was in the background of the writing. It was a book about the loss of American greatness in a weird way, because of the changing technology. That was always the main thematic premise of *RoboCop* – man trying to cope with technology.

"And all of that is worked into the script as a metaphor because RoboCop, if you start looking closely at his design – which was done by my good friend Rob Bottin – is constructed like an American car."



"Redecorate while I'm out and there will be... trouble."



Murphy's Halloween costume was much more impressive.



Hiring RoboCop for the village fête didn't go quite to plan.

SFX: The film also features a police force that has been privatised, resulting in disaster. This was the Reagan era, typified by denationalisation and a fierce corporate mentality. Can you speak about how this might have inspired, or found its way into, *RoboCop*?

EN: “Michael and I were products of America – and at that time it was Reagan’s America. But I was more tuned into what was happening in the business world. Corporations were coming into the movie business and everything was coming of age. At that time it was quite funny because there were these books that businessmen were reading: *The Art Of War* by Sun Tzu and *The Book Of The Five Rings*, which is an

“I wanted to literally put murder into the boardroom”

assassin’s guide to ancient Japan [laughs]... “Believe it or not but you can now buy *The Art of War* with the image of a corporate suit as the front cover...

“I remember some people in the business world were taking this ancient advice like ‘Show up early and get them when they don’t expect it,’ and putting it into these corporate manifestos [laughs]. So ➤



Edward Neumeier – one of *RoboCop*’s real engineers.

CHILD’S PLAY

“I think as soon as Orion saw that kids loved *RoboCop* they treated the intellectual property as a way to market it to them [laughs]. There were suddenly a lot of *RoboCop* toys and video games out there – all aimed at children.

“And even today the studios think that if they make these things PG they will make more money. But part of the design, and brand, of *RoboCop* is that it is violent and also really funny – both at the same time. My theory has always been that if you upset the audience by showing them some terrible moment of blood and horror you have, in just a second or two, a quick chance to tell a joke. And if the joke hits – like ‘Give the man a hand,’ in the original *RoboCop* – then the audience will laugh harder and louder. That is because they have been through the emotional experience of the violence and they are letting the laughter out as a sort of release. So the two are intertwined... And that is something that you cannot do when you begin to aim the character at children.”



SEQUEL STORIES

“No one knew that the first film was going to be a big hit. So when it was, it was, ‘All systems go!’ at Orion. The executives at the studio came to Michael and I and they told us, ‘If you can’t write a script in three months we will penalise you.’ Well, it took us both two years to work out the *RoboCop* character and get that first film down on paper! You can’t repeat that in such a short time. And then the writer’s strike came and they fired us [laughs]. From Orion’s point of view it was something they owned and something they paid for so they wanted a sequel right away. But more than that – they needed *RoboCop 2*. They were in big financial trouble and the sequel was something that was obviously going to rake in some cash.”



I wanted to, literally, put murder into the boardroom. With *RoboCop*, I think that we were heralding the start of the corporate era. As for the element of privatisation - all of the things that are in the *RoboCop* script already existed, to some extent, at the time. Jails were being privatised back then. So the idea of the police and other local services undergoing that process seemed perfectly normal. I just figured that would be the next thing. Everything was driven by money concerns so privatisation, if you believe in that, is all about saving cash. So that was what was going through my head when we were writing it."

SFX: You also really anticipate the rise of reality television with *RoboCop*...

EN: "I think that you have to give that to Paddy Chayefsky and his incredible film *Network*. He was one of the most inspiring screenwriters for me, and that movie really predicted what was going to happen with television. Michael and I were both big fans of that movie. But we weren't thinking of reality TV with *RoboCop*... it was more about bad news television and lousy reporting. That is definitely there in *RoboCop* but I think that we did a better job of satirising it in *Starship Troopers*."

SFX: Did you have any budgetary problems with *RoboCop*? It was pulled in at \$13 million which, back in 1987, was big money but not exactly comparable to the sort of cash that most big studio summer blockbusters were working with...

EN: "Yes, there were definitely some budget hurdles. If I remember correctly Orion didn't want to go over \$8 million. *The Terminator* had been made for around \$7 million and they wanted this to cost about the same. So *RoboCop* came close to never being made because of that. In fact, one day Jon Davison took me to a bar and said, 'It was such a cool script and I am

"There were hurdles. RoboCop came very close to never being made"



"Right, next on the evil agenda: let's cancel *Firefly*..."



As you can see, Paul Verhoeven likes to make low key movies.

so sorry it never worked out' - it was that close [laughs]. But we were back on the next day. These were the sorts of emotional hurdles that we had to go through with *RoboCop*."

SFX: What exactly happened that stopped you from being involved in *RoboCop 2*?

EN: "We were fired by Orion because there was a writer's strike that summer [laughs]. So if we had written it we would have violated our union agreement. I had just had my first child, and we had hospital expenses to pay, so..."

"Not that I would have gone against the Writer's Guild anyway, but I was between a rock and a hard place. You really cannot work in Hollywood unless you are in that union but Orion fired us anyway and then - after I had recommended him for another project - they went ahead and used Frank Miller to do the sequel. And we all know, of course, that Mr Miller is not a union man [laughs]. Anyway - it was strange."

SFX: Were you disappointed with how the sequel turned out?

EN: "It was what it was. I thought that Phil Tippett's model work on *RoboCop 2* was amazing. And it is a little bit better than *RoboCop 3*."

SFX: Although that is fairly small praise, right?

EN: "You know, it's funny - I was just talking to Paul Verhoeven the other day about this and he said, 'It is strange because no one seemed to understand the humour in what we were doing.' I think he is right. They certainly didn't get that in *RoboCop 2*. And you didn't see it in *RoboCop 3* or the Canadian television series either. But that humour is what allowed the character to exist. The trick is, though, that you also need to be serious about the character. The problem is that the other stuff they made was not serious about him. In *RoboCop 2* he is punching his way through walls, like *The Incredible Hulk*. He might be funny because he can do these things but



Indoor paintball was a popular office prank over at OCP.



RoboCop expertly satirised the cruelty of the media.

if you look at our RoboCop he is treated in a deadly serious manner. It is just that everything else around him is funny.”

SFX: Finally, then, and somewhat inevitably... What are your feelings about José Padilha's upcoming *RoboCop* remake?

EN: “I am not involved with it – but there are some contractual obligations there, because Michael and I created the character, and I like to be paid where I can, so there is a nice part to it [laughs]. But I decided at a certain point – and it was quite hard for me to admit this – that it no longer belongs to me. At one point it did. But now that property belongs to other people. So

“RoboCop has some of the most dedicated fans you could wish for”

my own feelings – and I don't know if I will like the new movie or not – is that I hope it is successful for the fans. *RoboCop* has some of the most dedicated and loyal fans you could ever wish for. I will probably watch it by myself, eventually, and maybe over several days [laughs] – but I think the fans deserve something that makes them feel good about the character again.”



26 years old and it still looks better than Fiefield in *Prometheus*.

THE ARNIE CONNECTION

“It is funny because there are some similarities between *RoboCop* and *The Terminator* – but in terms of their tone they are very different. Orion had been hugely successful with *The Terminator* but, despite what you might read online, Arnold was never seriously discussed for the role of *RoboCop*. We felt that he was too big to look good in the suit. So, on a personal basis, I never spoke to him or did any business with him. After we got green lit, and Rob Bottin had designed the suit, we knew we needed someone with a certain body type – not too muscular – as well as being a good and committed actor. We obviously got the right guy with Peter Weller.”



STARSHIP TROOPERS

“That took us almost a decade to get made. Paul and I decided that we were going to work together again just after *RoboCop* wrapped. It was the day afterwards, I think, and we were walking around some hills in Pennsylvania. Paul said he wanted to do something about kids growing up in Nazi Germany. Before you knew it, I had created my own Nazi Germany... but it was with bugs [laughs].

“But the whole thing with that movie is that we never told people what was bad and what was good. So Paul was surprised when some people saw it and they responded to the things he thought they might hate – like when the commander marches in like a Nazi... well some audiences were cheering. Of course, no, that is supposed to be bad [laughs]. Verhoeven has since said that I knew we would be misunderstood with *Starship Troopers* but that is not true – I really didn't know that some critics and viewers would think that it was being played seriously.

“The good thing, though, is that the fans who like that movie *really* like that movie. Now they are talking about remaking that as well – but no one is going to be able to produce a film like that anytime soon [laughs]. It is pretty wild ride.”



ED-BOY

Phil Tippett has a decorated career in special effects. The stop-motion expert tells **Calum Waddell** about his work on *RoboCop*

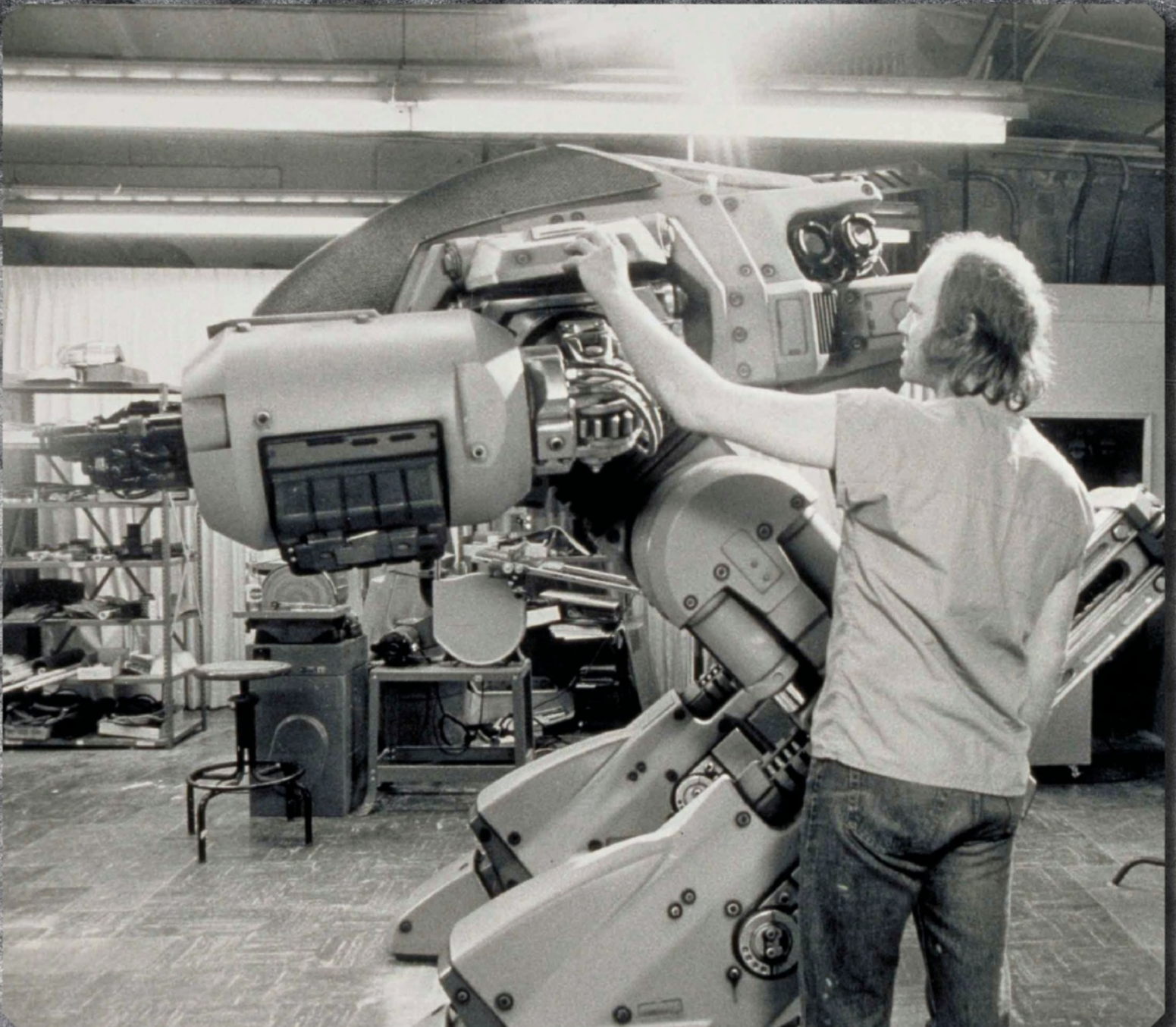


IMAGE: 20TH CENTURY FOX



// "IF YOU WERE DOING FANTASY CREATIONS, STOP MOTION WAS THE ONLY WAY TO GO"

generally, the way to go for any creator of onscreen creature carnage. Ray Harryhausen's superlative swansong, *Clash Of The Titans*, from 1981, exhibited some of the old master's finest film work to date, whilst the likes of *The Thing* (1982) and *The Terminator* (1984) showcased a stunning display of stop motion's relevance in the blockbuster era. Clearly, there was still potential in the old art form...

"If you were doing intricate fantasy creations, it was really the only way to go back then," continues Tippett. "Insofar as the creation of ED-209 went – I had to work with what Paul had in mind. However, the basis of the character was down to Edward Neumeier, the writer. He had been collecting these Japanese model kits where you could assemble these big robots with

Stop motion wizard Phil Tippett was already one of the top names in his profession by the time *RoboCop* rolled around in 1987. Having plied his trade on 1977's original *Star Wars* (including creating the miniature-monster work for the sequence in which Luke plays chess with Chewbacca onboard the Millennium Falcon), and its two sequels, Tippett was one of ILM's most reliable effects auteurs. His stop motion work had also won him an Oscar nomination for Disney's 1981 fantasy opus *Dragonslayer* whilst a special Academy Award was given to the great man for his accomplishments on 1983's *Return Of The Jedi*. After 1986's catastrophic *Howard The Duck*, however, Tippett opted to set up his own studio and "go it alone".

His first solo project? *RoboCop*.

"Looking back, it was a strange but exciting period for me," mentions Tippett when *SFX* catches up with him. "My involvement with *RoboCop* was really down to knowing the right person – and, funnily enough, that came from my early days at ILM. What happened is I was working on *Star Wars* when I met a producer called Jon Davison. He was working with Roger Corman at the time and they were doing *Piranha* with Joe Dante. Jon was also a big fan of stop motion special effects and I actually helped a little bit, uncredited, with *Piranha*. Zip forward almost a decade later and Jon has the *RoboCop* script. The first thing he does is take it to Paul Verhoeven, who he wants to direct it, and soon after that he gave me a call..."

THE STOP MOTION KING

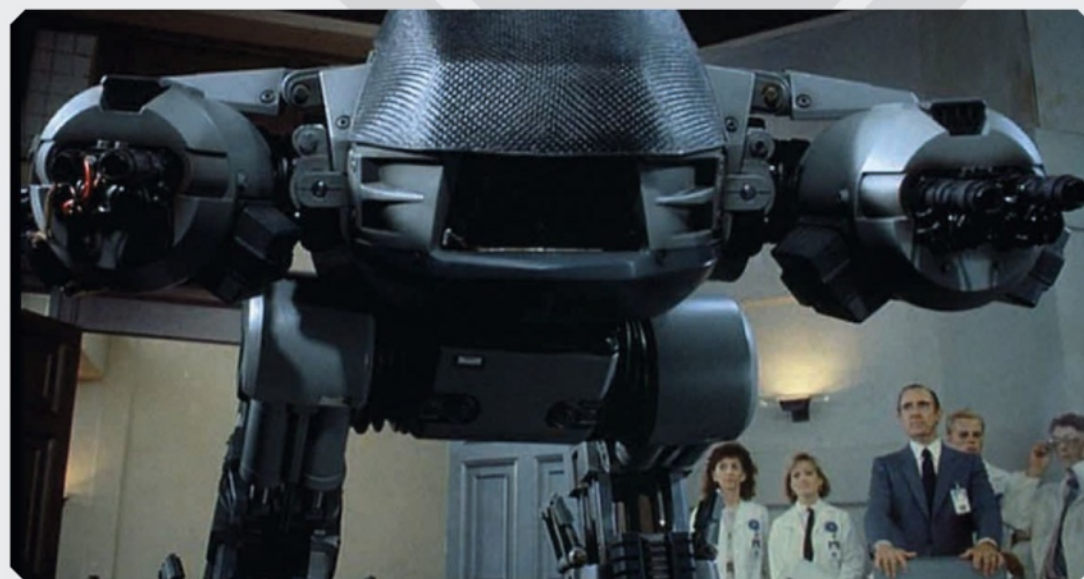
In the days before computer generated effects, stop motion animation was,

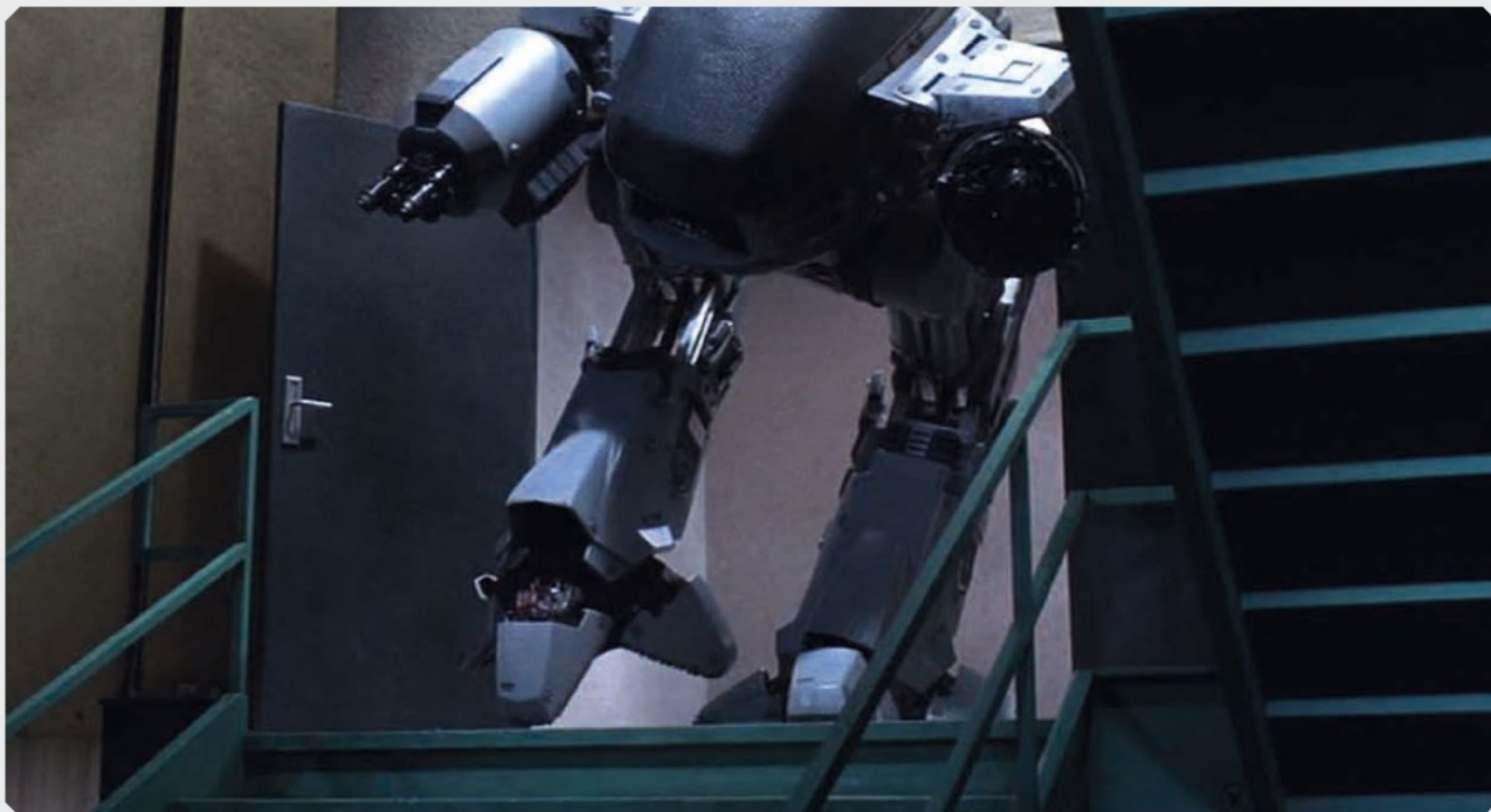
// "LOOKING BACK, IT WAS A STRANGE BUT EXCITING PERIOD FOR ME"

Above: Tippett at work on ED-209. No, he's not a giant – it's a miniature.

Below: Ed or dead: the iconic enforcement droid gets to work.

Below: Dutch master: Paul Verhoeven unleashes some robotic mayhem.





enormous guns in their hands. I remember being shown those and then getting told, 'This is what we are after' by Paul."

Tippett is careful, though, not to take the credit for ED-209's final filmic appearance...

"It was this brilliant 20 year-old designer and fabricator called Craig Davies who designed ED-209," mentions Tippett.

Above: ED-209 does his best "comedy drunk having trouble with stairs".

"I was enlisted to aid this kid – and Craig went on to do a number of huge movies, including *Starship Troopers*, which we worked on together. He is now a leading digital effects supervisor and it all began for him with *RoboCop*. Anyway, we worked quite closely together for Paul and we ran the designs for ED-209 past him. But then, once we had the thumbs up for how he was

going to look, we faced the challenge of animating him..."

Indeed, with a budget of \$13 million, *RoboCop* was not an excessively expensive Hollywood epic (for comparison purposes, that same summer's Bond blockbuster, *The Living Daylights*, was priced at \$40 million) and, as such, costs had to be cut. One such instance was in the amount of screen time



that the expensive, animated ED-209 could spend on screen...

"That was one of the biggest problems that we had," states Tippet. "Obviously RoboCop had to fight ED-209 – that was going to be one of the biggest scenes in the film – but Paul also wanted ED-209 to be present in much more of the movie. Some of that just couldn't happen on the budget that the film had – or even the timescale it was produced on – because it would mean a lot of shooting with the actors against a green screen and then doing the composition with the stop motion models afterwards. So, to hurry things up a little and also to cut the costs, I proposed that we build a full scale prop of ED-209. That way we could photograph the robot walking into the sequence where Ronny Cox holds a boardroom meeting with stop motion. But, when ED-209 shut down, we could cut to the prop."

Paul Verhoeven was suitably impressed by the end result...

"Yeah, it came out really well," laughs Tippet. "I said to Paul, 'Even though ED-209 will have shut down, we can keep the character alive with a sound effect, such as a peddle cord, so it sounds as if he is still

working and present. He doesn't need to move anymore – he just needs to appear to be functioning – and that way he can stay on screen for much longer [laughs]. We pulled a lot of little tricks like that during the making of *RoboCop*. And, again, all credit to Craig Davies – he went away and built the whole life-sized ED-209 prop with his wife. He had a little shop set up in Marin County, California, and he got it finished in a few months and shipped it off to the *RoboCop* filming location [laughs]. It was amazing."

SEQUEL STRIFE

Released during the summer season of 1987, and meeting with colossal critical acclaim, *RoboCop* was also an audience pleaser and a welcome box office hit for its struggling indie-studio Orion Pictures. Naturally, a sequel was rapidly on the agenda and Tippet was asked to come back onboard to oversee the stop motion trickery.

"*RoboCop 2* wasn't the greatest of experiences," admits Tippet, who was reunited with *The Empire Strikes Back* director Irvin Kershner for the 1990 follow-up. "It was very fraught. A filmmaker called Tim Hunter was hired by Orion to



Above: Bored of directors? ED-209 slaughters a suit in this famous scene.

Middle: Phil Tippet continues to create amazing effects today.

Below: Smoking legs. ED-209 comes a cropper after fighting RoboCop.

THE TRUE ROBO-SEQUEL?

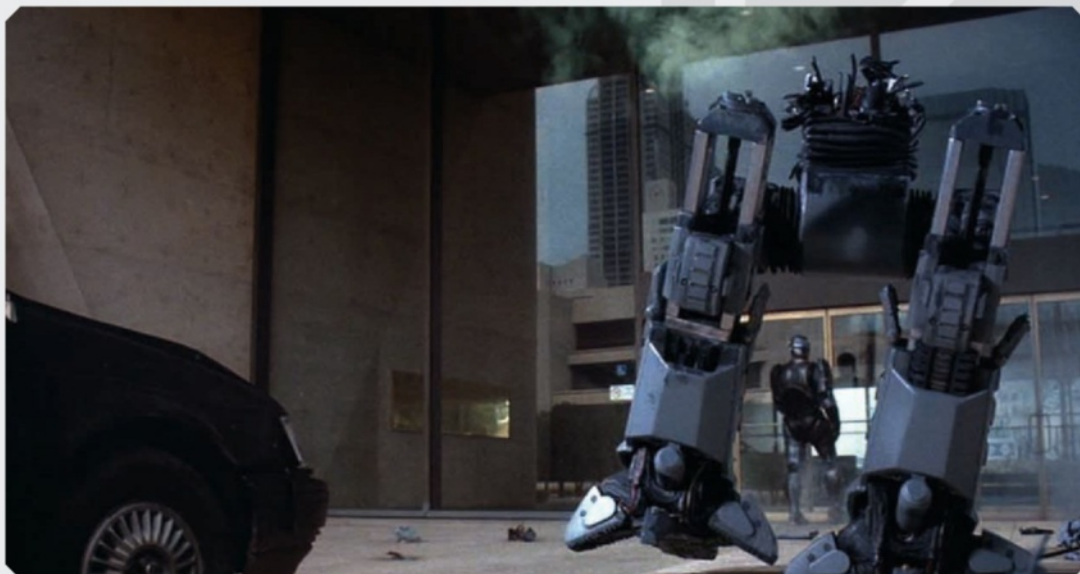
Forget *RoboCop 2*. Anyone seeking a proper sequel to the dystopian and delirious worldspace of Paul Verhoeven's original *RoboCop* need look no further than 1997's *Starship Troopers*. Reuniting some of *Robo*'s core creators, including Verhoeven, Tippet, producer Jon Davison and writer Edward Neumeier, the movie has humankind going to war with a bevy of grotesque interplanetary bugs. However, what Verhoeven actually gives the viewers is an imperialistic, military-first, fascist view of warmongering yahoos brutally bullying their way into another culture and taking control. As with *RoboCop*, the idea of corporate interests coming before human wellbeing, and technology being used for creatively catastrophic ends, is fully explored – whilst the trash-television tropes, so superbly satirised in the lawless land of Verhoeven's 1987 classic, are also carried over to *Starship Troopers*.

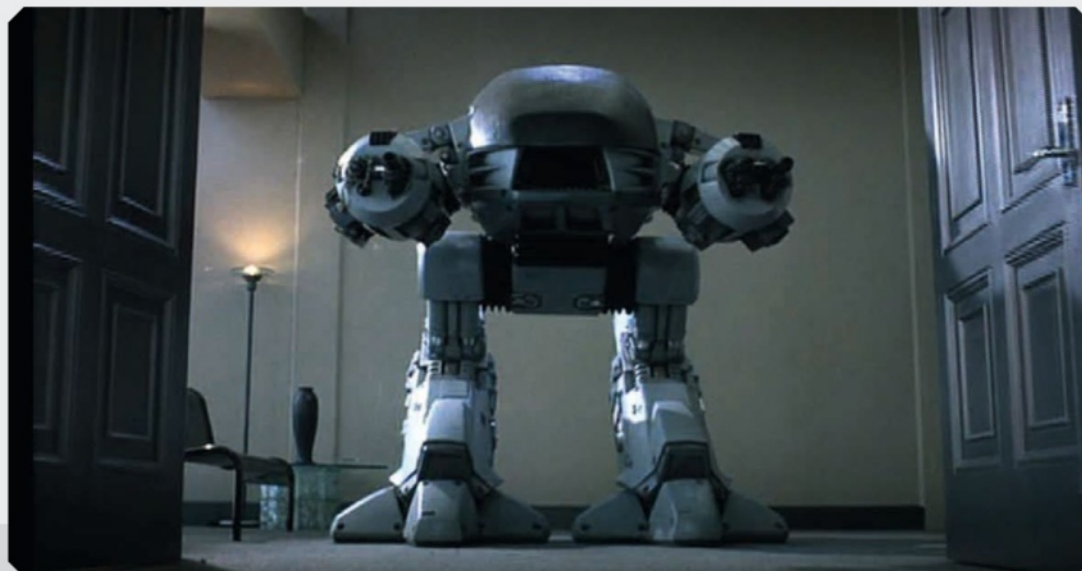
"I remember telling Paul, 'You are going to get crucified for this because you are basically making a \$100 million art film,'" laughs Tippet, looking back on the movie. "But that was the great thing about him – he wanted to do that and he got his way. When I sat down and read the script to *Starship Troopers* the political satire in it was blindingly obvious to me."



do the movie and, as far as the studio was concerned, they just wanted a movie called *RoboCop 2* to come out sometime in the middle of the summer. So they pushed it into production before it was ready – and when Tim left the project, Kershner came onboard. Unfortunately Kershner only had a few weeks to prep before we began filming it. There were all of these script problems – which Jon Davison, who also produced the sequel, was alert to – and they brought Frank Millar in to try and sort out a story that worked, but it was still really hurried. We all knew that there was no way this was going to be as good as the first film. I can still remember our very first night

// "TO HURRY THINGS UP I PROPOSED THAT WE BUILD A FULL SCALE ED-209"





of shooting. I was up until two or three o'clock in the morning assembling all of the storyboards with Kershner. He kept saying, 'We just don't have enough preparation to do this properly!' And I recall replying to him, 'The only preparation you will get on this show, my friend, is Preparation H' which is an ointment in America for haemorrhoids [laughs].' He also took on a stint on the even more ill-fated *RoboCop 3*, saying that "the studio put even less into that than they did *RoboCop 2*".

STILL BUILDING THE FUTURE

Tippet admits that he was never given a call in regards to working his expertise on the upcoming *RoboCop* remake...

"From what I can tell it is going to be mostly all CGI," he says. "But, yeah, I was

// "THE STUDIO PUT EVEN LESS INTO *ROBOCOP 3* THAN THEY DID WITH *ROBOCOP 2*"

Above: "Eddy or not, here I come." The killer droid is ready for battle.

Below: Robot wars! Murphy faces a smack down with ED-209.

Right: Tippet also worked on the *Twilight* movies. Bite your tongues, haters.

never spoken to about the new *RoboCop*. To be honest, I miss the hands-on approach to doing these things. Today there is too much bad CGI. With computer effects everything works more or less the same and everyone's skillset is at the same level too. Even the tools that are available to the visual effects artists are the same. So you get something like *Gravity* or *Life Of Pi* – they look great but they also seem as if they came out of the same block of cheese."

Still a master of his craft, and remaining active as a visual effects expert and filmmaker to this day (including directing *Starship Troopers: Hero of the Federation* – the first sequel to Paul Verhoeven's other great science fiction satire, and premiering an internet series entitled *Mad Gods*), Tippet hopes to keep the art of stop motion alive for years to come...

"I have a bunch of guys working for me now who see my older stuff, like *Star Wars* or *RoboCop*, and wish they had been around to work on these movies," he admits. "So with *Mad Gods* I am trying to give them the opportunity to do projects which are all stop motion and miniature work. Who knows? Maybe we'll create the next generation's ED-209..."

YOU CAN'T STOP THE MOTION

Famously uttering the words "I think we're extinct" after viewing the CGI rushes of *Jurassic Park*, Tippet would, nevertheless, end up grabbing an Academy Award for his stop motion work on the Spielberg blockbuster. Thankfully, his prophecy proved to be untrue and, now working predominantly as a "visual effects supervisor", Tippet remains busy with credits that include *Evolution* (2001), *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (2008) and the *Twilight* series. Moreover, a return to familiar territory, with the new JJ Abrams-directed *Star Wars* series, and the long-in-production *Jurassic World* (the fourth in the *Jurassic Park* franchise), might well be on the horizon.

"I might be involved with *Jurassic World*," he teases. "It is not locked down yet, though, so that's all I can say [laughs]. As for *Star Wars* – I've spoken to JJ and he knows I'd be thrilled. I have great memories of doing the original three movies with George. So... who knows?"





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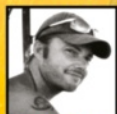
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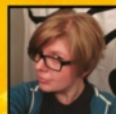
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ROBOCOP

What happens when you take a violent masterpiece and give it to ITV's profanity-averse editors? **Rob Power** finds out

1994

wasn't a vintage year. We waved goodbye to

Star Trek: The Next Generation and hello to baby Justin Bieber. Britpop was born, but *SFX* was still a full year away from existence. And for *RoboCop* fans, it was a strange old time indeed. A time when anything could happen. When weird phrasing and strange editing decisions could turn an expletive-laden sci-fi actioner into an unexpected comedy classic. In short, it was the year that ITV got its sticky mitts on *RoboCop*, and turned it into an entirely different film.

It seems strange now, quaint even, that such a thing could occur. Director Paul Verhoeven had unleashed the chrome-clad cop who couldn't be stopped on the box office in 1987, and made Alex Murphy's cyborg-ified face a science fiction icon in the process. An adults-only adrenalin shot of gratuitous violence, potty-mouthed language galore and delicious satire, *RoboCop* made one hell of an impression in the cinemas. A mere seven years later (can you imagine waiting that long for *anything* today?), *RoboCop* made its debut on UK television, and a new legend was born.

For ITV, usually known as the brash, commercial alternative to the stuffy BBC, suddenly came over all Reithian and prudish, and had no intention of unleashing the existing cut of the film onto the channel. You can almost imagine the meeting the ITV executives had:

"Jones, the language is *awfully* uncouth in this moving picture, wouldn't you say?"

"Er, yes sir."

"I find it all quite unpalatable. And there's so much *violence*. It's enough to put a man off his supper."

"That's understandable sir."

"Change it."

"Change it sir?"

"That's what I said, Jones. Overdub those swear words right out, there's a good chap. Can't go upsetting the advertis... er, viewers."

And that is exactly what they did. It was a pretty strange decision any way you look at it. It may not have been quite so mystifying if the film was going out at prime time, but no – it was broadcast gone 10pm. Admittedly TV watchdogs weren't quite as liberal about the F-word and extreme violence back then as they are now, but even granting that, some of the ITV censor's "clean" alternatives are hilariously children's TV friendly. We may never the name of the warped genius

responsible for the ITV edit, but the result was a slice of surreal comedy gold.

START AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

The implications of what we'll call "The Overdub Gambit" had a huge and, frankly, hilarious impact on the movie that was to air. The first glimpse of the comedic glory to come appeared a mere three minutes into the film. Sergeant Reed, professional hard-ass and the face of a flustered police force, has his hands full with a weaselly lawyer and his unsavoury client. They're arguing the toss with Reed

about a murder (or is it attempted murder?) charge, when the heroic desk sergeant has enough, takes the lawyer by the scruff of the neck and hits him with the hardest

WHY DOES SOMEONE
KEEP SHOUTING "AIRHEAD"
LOUDLY WHENEVER I SAY
ASSHOLE?

WHAT DID YOU
CALL ME?

YOU HEARD ME,
CRUMBAG!

// "THE RESULTS HAD A HUGE AND HILARIOUS IMPACT ON THE MOVIE"

unaware that that he even had a tail. Clarence Boddicker, wearer of terrible glasses and crime lord, goes a step further. "I bet that really ticks you off," he says, when Murphy hears that his partner has apparently been rubbed out. Harsh, we're sure you'll agree.

Once Murphy has been chosen as the candidate for RoboCop, we get an absolute corker of a scene, a prime example of the overdubber's art. For really, it takes an artist to take the most terrible of swears and effortlessly transform it into a moment of surreal beauty. It happens in the iconic scene where Morton, the man with the RoboCop plan, stares lovingly into the eyes of his creation as it is tested. "You," he says, with more than a hint of menace, "are going to be a bad mother crusher."

Of course he is! It's top of the list of any self-respecting half-man, half-machine policeman. Get out there and crush some mothers. After all, what better way is there to test out the weight of that shiny robo-suit? Bob Morton feels so strongly about his new creation that he doesn't care how many mothers are smushed under its mighty boots. Death to the mothers! It's like a weird, twisted form of poetry that nobody really understands, asked for or wants, and yet you can't help but be drawn to it.

Which is handy, because there's plenty more where that came from. Perhaps the strangest overdub occurs during RoboCop's very first outing at a liquor store run by a friendly little ma and pa. A man who's rocking a rather natty military chic jacket and a wholly ineffective submachine gun is robbing them. As soon as he sees RoboCop, a clearly



SHAKE
THAT TAIL FOR ME,
MR POLICEMAN.



YOU WANT
FWHYS WITH
THAT?



YOU, MY FRIEND, WILL
CRUSH MORE MOTHERS
THAN YOU EVER THOUGHT
POSSIBLE.

insult he's got: "Your client's a crumbag, you're a crumbag and crumbags see the judge on Monday morning!"

Zing! There's nothing quite like a police officer calling you out for the bag full of bread bits you really are. Is scumbag really offensive enough to justify a voiceover anyway? The answer, obviously, is "no", unless you're Mary Whitehouse, but ITV was clearly hedging its bets.

At least the dubbing artist here does a half decent impression of Reed. Later in the film, OCP boss Dick Jones (Ronny Cox) isn't afforded the same courtesy during the infamous toilet scene in which he ruthlessly deals with insubordinate underling Bob Morton (Miguel Ferrer). "I remember when I was a young executive for this company," muses Jones. "I used to call the old man funny names. 'Iron Butt.' 'Boner.' Once I even called him..." At which point somebody else entirely bellows "Airhead!" to cover up "Ass hole!" Wow, Dick, that takes balls.

FWHY, OH FWHY?

Not only did the genius behind ITV's mega-dub (for that is how it shall be known henceforth) throw in the odd made-up insult, he also resurrected one of the all-time

greats: dipstick. In the aftermath of the robbery that leads Murphy to his fate, the bad guys are in the back of a truck counting the money, but there's bad news. The money's been burned! Disaster! Head honcho Clarence doesn't mince his words: "It's as good as marked, you dipstick!" BOOM! That's going to sting for some time, thief-in-a-silly-hat! As if that weren't enough, he follows up with the equally devastating "ass-head", because as we all know there is no worse place to have your rear end relocated than on your head.

Hang on. "ass-head"? So "asshole" has to be dubbed out but "ass-head" is acceptable? There's some weird logic at work here.

The next scene to suffer from the all-powerful wrath of the ITV edit guy and his beguiling way with words is Murphy's death. It's a pretty grim scene to watch, and yet for the unknowing English audiences of '94 it appeared to be some kind of macabre sitcom, where men taunt a policeman with the sort of language that your mother might use.

"Your tail is mine," says one cryptic criminal to Murphy, who was presumably

armoured death-dealer the likes of which has never been seen, he does what any sensible street-level hoodlum would do: empties his magazine into RoboCop's chest, screaming, "Fwhy me, fwhy me?"

It's a fair enough question. *Fwhy* him? We've never quite got to the bottom of it, although we're reasonably sure that this was one of the last overdubs made. How can we know that? Well, let's face it, with the best will in the world... *fwhy* just isn't a word. We sincerely wish it was, but it's not. It's simply the desperate solution of a man who has been paid to put words where no words can be. It takes a certain type of mind to record a completely made up word and plonk it into the middle of a cult hit, and we can confirm we are *huge* fans of said mind.

Or maybe it's just really bad dubbing, and the *f* from the original soundtrack managed to make a sneaky cameo or two...

Edit guy gives us another wonderful, completely off-the-wall non sequitur, once again at the hands of hard-pressed Sergeant Reed. You all know how it goes when you're in a corner and every policeman in the precinct is on your back about strikes and the like. The language gets heated, even between fellow officers. Which is why Reed drops some truth: "You listen to me you


waghole, you're talking about shutting down a major metropolitan police force. Without cops, this city will tear itself apart!"

You tell 'em Reed... wait, what? A *what* hole? We've encountered wormholes and Hobbit holes, time holes and, naturally, bum holes – but a wag hole? It's like a philosophical quandary wrapped in a simple two syllable nonsense-burst. Can a hole wag? We don't know, but we're not willing to hang around Reed to find out.

CHOPPED TO PIECES

With moments like this liberally sprinkled throughout the edit like nuggets of comedy candy, it's little wonder that this alternate-universe *RoboCop* has become the stuff of legends. And we haven't even mentioned the way that anything even vaguely violent has been ruthlessly excised – including the key scene where Murphy gets shot to pieces which is reduced to about three bloodless seconds. The '90s ITV version of *RoboCop* cuts at least 15 minutes off the running time, leaving some moments utterly nonsensical and eliminating almost completely the iconic melting hoodlum moment.

It's so strange, so out of the leftfield that the only proper response is to laugh. It's a bizarre mix of commitment to getting a job done, but not really caring how. The only thing is, when most of us have a long day at the office, millions of people aren't waiting on the results. Fans have been laughing at this particular late night in the overdubbing suite for nearly 20 years now, and we're pretty sure they won't be stopping any time soon. Ain't that right, crumbags? 🍌



DO I LOOK LIKE
A WAGHOLE TO
YOU, SON? DIDN'T
THINK SO...



YOU KNOW WHAT YOU LOOK
LIKE IN THAT HAT DON'T
YOU? A RIGHT FLIPPIN'
DIPSTICK...

AWRIGHT,
RODNEY?

NATURE + TECHNOLOGY + SPACE + HUMANS + ENGINEERING



**ARE ANY
ASTEROIDS GOING
TO COLLIDE
WITH EARTH?**



**WHICH
ORGANS COULD
YOU LIVE
WITHOUT?**



**COULD WE
HARNESS
LIGHTNING FOR
ENERGY?**



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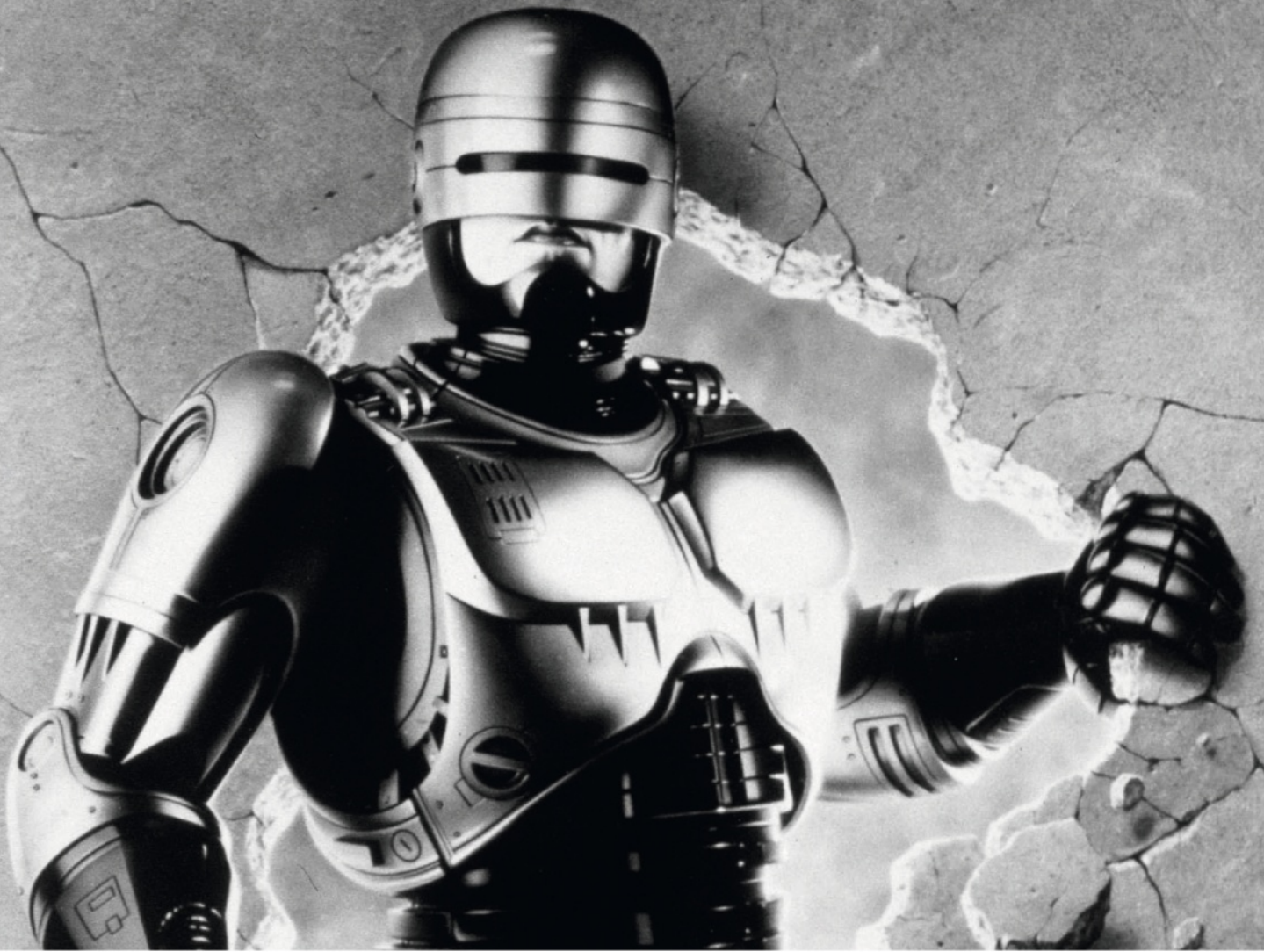
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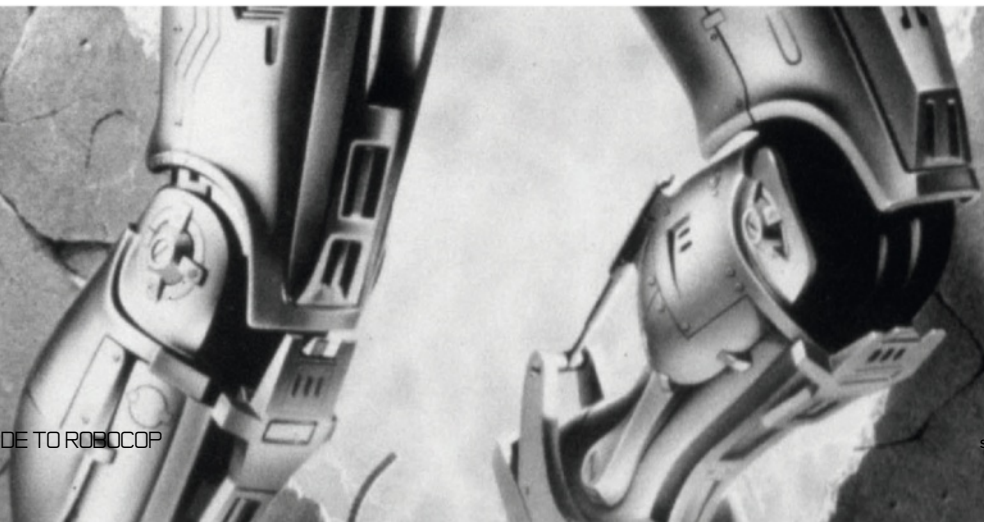


ROBOCOP

RIDES AGAIN!

Stephen Kelly looks at a sequel that had more than the usual weight of expectation heaped upon it...

IMAGE: SNAP/REX



Critically acclaimed with a box office gross of just over \$53,000,000 in America alone, *RoboCop* came marching out of nowhere and shot cinema in the balls. And that, as you may imagine, made Orion Pictures, very happy indeed.

Work began on the sequel pretty much right away. Yet, from the start, there were problems. Edward Neumeier and Michael Miner, original screenwriters on *RoboCop*, had written a first draft of the sequel but were stopped from writing any further due to a strike by the Writer's Guild of America. It would last five months, ruling them out of the project. Paul Verhoeven, the director seen as the main reason *RoboCop* worked, was also not able to commit to a sequel, having already signed up to direct the Philip K Dick adaptation *Total Recall*.

So, that was the three minds that made the original one of the smartest, most biting satirical takes on science fiction not returning for its follow up. But dead or alive, *RoboCop 2* was coming.

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON'S HOT

"Michael [Miner] and I started our sequel script right before the strike," Neumeier explains. "The industry ground to a halt. Orion signed a waiver in order to develop other possible *RoboCop* scripts while we were on strike. They asked me who they should hire and I recommended [*The*

EVIDENCE BOX

ROBOCOP
YEAR OF RELEASE:
JUNE 22, 1990
DIRECTOR:
IRVIN KERSHNER
SCRIPT BY:
FRANK MILLER,
WALON GREEN
STARRING:
PETER WELLER
(ALEX MURPHY/
ROBOCOP); NANCY
ALLEN (OFFICER
ANNE LEWIS);
BELINDA BAUER (DR.
JULIETTE FAXX); DAN
OHERLIHY (THE
OLD MAN); OOP
PRESIDENT); FELTON
PERRY (OCP VICE
PRESIDENT DONALD
JOHNSON); TOM
NOONAN (CAIN);
US BOX-OFFICE:
\$45,681,173

Left: We hope OCP is going to pay for that flagrant vandalism.

Below: "Murphy, have you ever heard the 'Why was the robot angry?' joke?"

Dark Knight Returns artist/writer] Frank Miller and Alan Moore, who had just done *Watchmen*. They went to Alan first and he said something like, 'I don't do movies.' Frank said yes, so my attitude was, 'Fine. Frank can work on his version and we'll work on ours.' The strike continued, and Michael and I were ultimately fired for breach [of contract]. Now I think everyone wishes it had ended differently."

Indeed, producer Jon Davison would take Neumeier's advice and commission a debut screenplay from Frank Miller, a comic book writer who, a year before *RoboCop*'s 1987 release, had reinvented Batman – and indeed comics as a whole – with *The Dark Knight Returns*. According to Davison, it was exactly the gritty, darker "tragic hero" treatment that was needed.

"I liked its humour, the politics, that dark edge, the inventive action," Davison explained in an interview. "Frank seemed like the ideal choice: and luckily, he wanted to do it."

Sadly, perhaps because of Miller's screenwriting inexperience, his script would be deemed "unfilmable" as it was written. And while it would later live on in comic form as *Frank Miller's RoboCop* years (see page 122), Walon Green, the writer of violent western *The Wild Bunch*, would be brought in to heavily re-write it. It's unclear how much of Miller's original screenplay survived.

No such problems would befall the sequel's choice of director, however; for

// "MILLER SEEMED LIKE THE IDEAL WRITER"

Irvin Kershner was a man who knew a thing or two about adopting huge franchises. An independent filmmaker, he had been given the ever-so tricky task of taking over directorial duties from George Lucas on beloved *Star Wars* sequel *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1980. No small deal.

Kershner's background in independent film and success with *Star Wars* were also fused together with his cynical view of the industry in general, saying in an interview how important and neglected "the human side" of cinema was.

"The business of filmmaking has become so commercial," he said. "Film is an expression. You're not documenting scenery, you're revealing the human heart. The greatest landscape in film is the human face. Well, something has happened in our time and it's only profit that seems to count, not what the film says or what it can do for people. We are living in a time of moral indifference... but I think it will change."

He may not have made a name for a satirically absurd style of violence like Verhoeven did, but a director so passionate about the humanity of his characters seemed like an ideal choice to







explore the psychological trauma at the cybernetic heart of *RoboCop*. Perhaps this was just what the franchise needed to stay fresh: the input of new visions. Surely the future of *RoboCop* was in safe hands...?

THEY SAY HE'S GOT A BRAIN

Alas, it would appear not. *RoboCop 2*, from pre-production to release, was a mess.

The story picks up after the first *RoboCop* with a promising opening that shows – after a gunfight, of course – our hero sitting idly outside the home of his former wife and son. The film looks poised to ask: are they really his wife and son anymore? Or did (as original *Robo*-writer Edward Neumeier believes) Alex Murphy cease to be once he became a machine? It's the sort of existential depth that the original only had time to touch on. It seems now, though, the franchise was finally ready to explore the consequences of a man becoming a RoboCop.

Instead, it merely pays lip service to the idea; Murphy's wife, distraught at the prospect of her husband being so grotesquely alive, is never seen again after the first act. From then on, it's a plot with no focus, blasting outwards like a bad case of diarrhoea.

Among many, there are two main plot threads. After the success of creating the first RoboCop, OCP is seeking to rush out a "RoboCop 2". A pointedly ironic storyline, it provides one of the film's true highlights when the company's big investment results in a series of prototypes that either shoot

their creators or destroy themselves in screaming agony.

The second main thread is *RoboCop 2*'s biggest downfall: the dehumanisation of RoboCop himself.

After the business with Murphy's wife at the beginning stalls, moustache-twirling psychiatrist Dr Juliette Faxx is wheeled in to reset Murphy back to his default settings – like a less cheery version of *Toy Story 3*'s Spanish Buzz Lightyear subplot. With RoboCop all but entirely cut off from his human memories, the character turns into nothing more than an animated action figure, with a limited soundboard of slogans ("bad language leads to bad feelings!") for dialogue and then wanders around aimlessly shooting people. He becomes a joke, basically – a cartoon version of himself played for cheap laughs with little wit or subtlety. The same could be said about the film itself.

More than anything, *RoboCop 2* comes across as a film of ideas cobbled together with little thought or care of how to execute them. In a clunky development of the original's theme of privatisation, for example, the police have gone on strike, leaving the lobotomised RoboCop and a bizarrely mute Officer Lewis to patrol a city tearing itself apart. Except... it's not, really. Never does the film make you feel any sense of chaos. Only a comical scene with a Little League team of thieves robbing a store pays any mind to the idea.

And then there's Nuke. At the beginning, Detroit is still chock-a-block with crime,

Left: Murphy and Lewis reunited – one of the few things the film got right.

Above: Robo-replacement. Cain/RoboCop 2 goes on the rampage.

but of a very specific kind. There's drug dealing; drugs, and – in case you hadn't got the somewhat preachy message – some more stuff about drugs. A new narcotic has hit the streets, which, in keeping with the film's lack of subtlety, is called "Nuke".

Peddling Nuke with no sense of style or subversion is a team of *Beano*-style villains headed up by Cain, who, somehow, seems to have taken over the city. He, like everything else, feels cartoonish and forced. And that's ➤

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

A selection of reviews from the film's release in 1990...

"From the looks of things, director Irvin Kershner and screenwriters Frank Miller and Walon Green didn't know what to do for a follow-up. For starters, though, they cut out the human drama." *Rolling Stone*

"Set in the Detroit of the very near future, *RoboCop 2* is a brutal, cynically violent movie about a brutal, cynically violent civilisation in decay. As savagely graphic as its predecessor but less skillful by half." *The Washington Post*

"I didn't much like *RoboCop 2* (the use of that killer child is beneath contempt), but I've gotta hand it to them: It's strange how funny it is, for a movie so bad. Or how bad, for a movie so funny." *Roger Ebert*

"It doesn't have very much of the original's energy, passion and remorseless narrative logic... It's deeply, disturbingly violent in a way which is more manipulative than gory; unlike the original, with its prophetic vision of the future, this sequel seems to spend too much time glorying in the very horrors it has outlined." *Time Out*

A GRAPHIC NOVEL IDEA

The *Dark Knight Returns* writer Frank Miller's foray into scriptwriting was deemed "unfilmable", and re-written to oblivion. When asked how close his version had been to the final script, the screenplay had been scribbled over so many times, Miller could only reply with, "Which one?"

However, in 2003, he was given the chance to air his original vision. Miller was approached by Avatar Press's William Christensen to adapt his lost story as a comic series.

This was not the first time *RoboCop* had been boxed off into the land of 2D; he'd already been adopted successfully by Marvel in 1990 by Batman writer Alan Grant, with the stories taking place in an alternative timeline between movies 2 and 3 (see page 142 for more details).

When it came to being reunited with his comic credentials, Miller finally got his desired creative control. He filled the book with fragmented ideas from the movie's two sequels. Murphy stands by his striking officers, and ends up facing off against mercenaries that OCP has hired to police the streets. Sadly, the general critical reaction to Miller's comic was once again ill-disposed, with *Entertainment Weekly* calling it "uninteresting", and one forum suggesting politely, "It's time to let the nostalgia die." Ouch.

even before he's stripped for parts by OCP and turned into an evil junkie cyborg. For, you know, "reasons".

The film was a shadow of its former self; a self-parody where before it used to be a smart pastiche. As the *New York Times* said in 1990, it was "the difference between an idea and an afterthought."

So, in a time of such classy, big budget science fiction sequels as *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *Aliens*, what exactly went wrong?

THE SUITS TAKE CHARGE

Perhaps inevitably, the problems that were obvious on the surface stemmed from inside the production itself. Unlike the first *RoboCop*, which was the undiluted idea of two guys with a screenwriting dream, to which Paul Verhoeven added religious subtext and style, *RoboCop 2* was now in Orion's control. As often happens when Hollywood execs get involved at a creative level, they micromanaged the project straight into a stale state of oblivion.

The first mistake, it seems, began before Frank Miller even had time to write a first draft of the script...

"I'm sorry that more people didn't like the picture," Jon Davison would reflect several years later. "The whole thing was ass-backwards, because the studio came up with a release date before they even had a story. It was like, 'We're opening in 2,000 theaters, kid, and you better put out something.' As soon as that happens, the whole thing had gone to hell in a hand-basket."

Indeed, such was Orion's arrogance in thinking that they were the only ones that could get *RoboCop 2* right, the opinions of Kershner and Miller were treated with suspicion or ignored.

In the case of the latter, for example, the script – which had been, as noted before, re-written several times – had its "fat" trimmed so as to not put audience off with a long-running time. That "fat", as it goes, just happened to include a backstory for Officer Lewis and a fleshed out subplot which explored RoboCop's relationship with his wife – all good character work that could really have lifted the film and helped it be more than just a series of fights.

Years later, Miller would look back and admit that the movie is "kind of all over the map." The experience all but destroyed his enthusiasm for screenwriting; it was not until *Sin City* in 2005 that he tried it again.

// // "THE PROJECT WAS
MICROMANAGED
INTO OBLIVION"



"I learnt the same: don't be the writer," Miller has said. "You haven't got the power. The screenplay is the fire hydrant and there's rows of dogs around the block waiting for it."

He wasn't the only one to have his spirit crushed by the experience. Star of the show, Peter Weller, has frequently noted his disappointment working on the project, and his disillusionment with the political subtlety of the original being replaced by rather unsubtle big monsters instead. In one interview, Weller reflected on the weakness of the script, saying it did not have "the code, the spine, or the soul" of the first movie.

"Yeah, *RoboCop 2* didn't have a third act," he said. "I told the producers and Irv Kershner and Frank Miller. I told them all. I said, 'Where's the third act here, man?' They said, 'No, no the monster's going to be

enough.' I said, 'Look, it's not enough!'"

Alas, Weller was so unhappy working on *RoboCop 2* that he would never return to the role again citing, along with the "exhausting" and "cumbersome" suit, that he was upset that some important scenes did not make it into the final cut.

"There was a couple of things that made the character more human that weren't used. I can't remember exactly what the scenes were, I just remember wondering why they weren't in," he would say, no doubt referencing the parts of the film that featured Murphy's wife.

MISSSED OPPORTUNITIES

Despite all of this bad blood, the film managed a decent enough opening weekend (although a smaller overall gross compared to the original). It was enough to make possible, yes, a third *RoboCop* film

– which brought its own set of problems, including finding a new actor to fill the famous cyborg suit and a ludicrous kid-friendly direction.

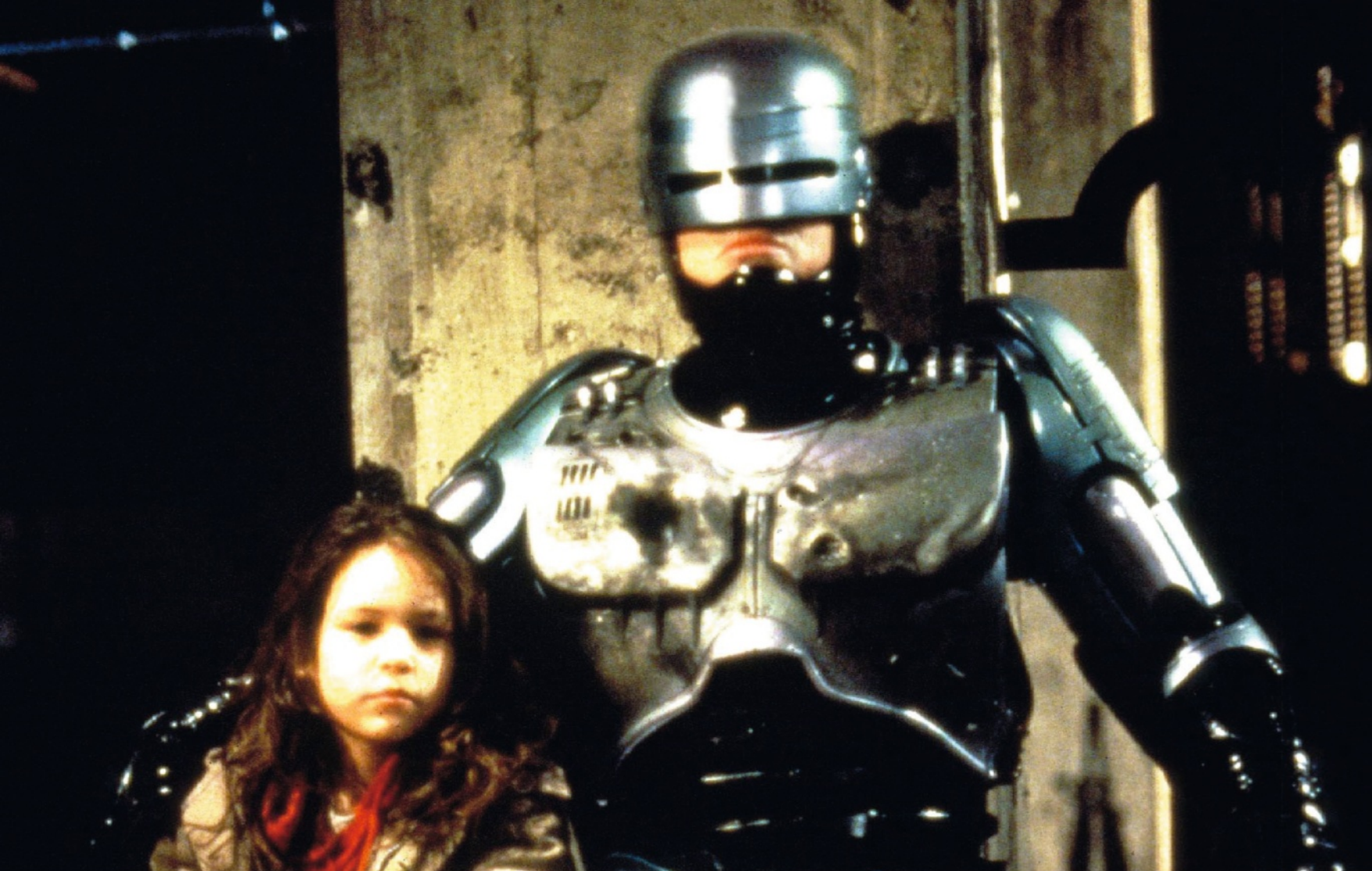
That the franchise's decline set in with *RoboCop 2* is a real shame. Because, for all its problems, it feels like a well-intentioned movie. It's a film of moments, and some of those moments are pretty good. There's the darkly hilarious prototype *RoboCop 2* scene; some on-form mock-adverts with a cheery capitalist smile, and the harrowing scene in which Murphy is once again torn limb from limb by a feral gang. Alas, these couldn't disguise the fundamental problems at the core of the project.

This was a film that so desperately wanted to be as good as *RoboCop* – but was not allowed. Although given what was to follow, perhaps we should be grateful that it was even as good as it was. ●

Left: Kids with guns: Hob was one of *RoboCop 2*'s more unusual villains.

Below: "Missed!" Murphy is in considerably better shape than that car.





ROBOCOP 3

THIRD TIME UNLUCKY

One of the most disastrous threequels of all time, *Robocop 3* remains a byword for “bad”. **Calum Waddell** rummages through the wreckage



With its Reagan-era fears and hyper-violent imagery, 1987's *RoboCop* hardly seemed like ideal fodder for a children's animated television series, video games, a line of kid's merchandising or a PG-rated small screen spin-off. Yet, this is exactly what happened – and early signs of fatigue setting into *Robo*-mania were evident by the time of 1990's so-so first sequel, which introduced a juvenile antagonist and a simultaneous comic book tie-in. The proof was in the proverbial pudding: at the box office, *RoboCop 2* was only a minimal success, barely breaking even and, despite some outstanding effects work, failing to capture the critical acclaim of its predecessor.

So it was, then, that news of a *RoboCop 3* was met with trepidation – especially when it was revealed that the desperate suits at Orion Pictures, then trying to scramble out of a financially uncertain future (the studio would file for bankruptcy in November 1991), hoped to make the next instalment with a PG13 rating. Given that *RoboCop* had found an unexpected appeal with, in particular, young boys – who had discovered the original on VHS – the thinking was that the mythology might just bring in some blockbuster credit if it was aimed at a more youthful viewership.

EVIDENCE BOX

ROBOCOP 3

YEAR OF RELEASE:

1993

DIRECTOR:

FRED DEKKER

SCRIPT BY:

FRANK MILLER, FRED

DEKKER

STARRING:

ROBERT JOHN BURKE

(ROBOCOP), RIP TORN

(THE CEO), NANCY

ALLEN (ANNIE LEWIS),

JOHN CASTLE (PAUL

MODAGGETT), REMY

RYAN (NIKKO)

Left: Back, but not for good. *RoboCop 3* was a sad end to the franchise.

Below: Kanemitsu (Maku) wrinkles his nose at the quality of the dialogue.

"UNFORTUNATELY ROBOCOP 2 HAD UNDERPERFORMED. NO ONE KNEW WHAT TO DO WITH IT"

At this point, Fred Dekker entered the fray. A promising up-and-coming director with two certified cult classics to his name – the corking zombie-horror opus *Night Of The Creeps* (1986) and the sublime creature feature *The Monster Squad* (1987) – Dekker looked as if he was headed to the top of Tinseltown. Unfortunately, the San Francisco-born genre enthusiast was about to walk into a catastrophe of ED-209-sized proportions...

BOOTING UP

"I got involved in *RoboCop 3* because one of the executives at Tri-Star, called Michelle Manning, was a good friend of mine," begins Dekker. "She had produced some big films at the time, such as *The Breakfast Club*, and we had been working together on a screenplay called *Shadow Company*, which Shane Black and John Carpenter were involved with. We got along very well and, after *Shadow Company* fell through, Michelle and I were trying to figure out something else to do together. Well, she became an executive at Orion and she began to ask about the *RoboCop* franchise. She knew *RoboCop 2* had underperformed and she wanted to find a way to continue the property. Unfortunately,

it became clear to her, that no one at the studio really knew what to do with it."

The Irvin Kershner-directed *RoboCop 2* had been loud and garish – an approach that led some to wonder if the cyborg-cop had fallen pray to the same stylistic approach of the Reagan-era action flicks that the original epic had so successfully subverted ("obviously no one in the Orion front office told the filmmakers that less is more" intoned *Variety*).

"The big problem is that some of the other popular franchises of the time were driven by their filmmakers," continues Dekker. "*The Terminator* was a James Cameron property and *Back To The Future* was Robert Zemeckis – and these guys really knew what they were doing with these titles. But the character of *RoboCop* was kind of free-floating; there was no one driving the ship because he had gone from Paul Verhoeven to Irvin Kershner and these two *RoboCop* movies were quite different from each other. I loved the first film – I still think it is one of the greatest comic book movies ever made. So I had a real fondness towards the character. But I hadn't seen the sequel at that point so when Michelle asked me to come to the Orion offices and said, 'What





IMAGES: MOVIESTORE COLLECTION/REX

do you think about developing the next *RoboCop*?" I really could not say no. I was in the right place, at the right time, with the right contact and I was being offered the job of looking after a \$24 million movie. No one would say no to that – I don't care what the fans say [laughs]. So, despite the obstacles, I leapt right in."

The first thing Dekker did was to go and find out how the first follow-up fared...

"I went to see *RoboCop 2* after I took the gig to do the third film and it seemed to me that the filmmakers were fishing for the right tone," he admits. "Verhoeven had created a tone that I have never felt in a film since then – *Starship Troopers* notwithstanding. I thought that, especially in terms of the postmodern aspect, Kershner and Frank Miller were having a difficult time getting it right. To be honest, I found the first sequel quite caustic and needlessly violent – but in a way that wasn't balanced by the sense of humour which made the original really work."

MILLER'S TALE

Dekker also had his own take on the initial

/// "VERHOEVEN CREATED A TONE I HAVE NEVER FELT IN A FILM SINCE THEN – *STARSHIP TROOPERS* NOTWITHSTANDING"

Above: Not even the return of fan-favourite Sergeant Reed could save the film.

Opposite: New *RoboCop* on the block: Robert John Burke struts his metal stuff.

film's well-commented upon political and religious metaphors – from the cold, corporate anarchy of Detroit (with machine replacing man, an apt allegory for the city's then-plummeting car industry) to the sight of Peter Weller resurrected, Jesus-style, as a futuristic saviour of the streets...

"I think Verhoeven's film, even though it is left wing, feels right wing," laughs the director. "There is a subtlety in *RoboCop* that is very hard to replicate, especially when you are, effectively, making a comic book movie. With *RoboCop 3* I wanted to try and do something like Verhoeven had done – so our film was a blatant admonition of corporate mentality. But the third film came out at a time when Reagan was gone. America was still pretty right wing, and we had George Bush in the Whitehouse, but the fact Reagan was not there any more made any left wing movie feel, perhaps, not as urgent as it would have a few years earlier."

Also roped into the *RoboCop 3* fray was Frank Miller, ironically a conservative himself. Miller was credited with co-penning the screenplay to *RoboCop 2*, although many of his ideas were scrapped and the writer would be outspoken over his disappointment at the final film. Unfortunately for Miller, he would experience a similarly turbulent time on *RoboCop 3*...

"I was, and remain, a huge fan of Frank Miller," reveals Dekker. "I was reading his comic book work in the 1980s and I thought he was brilliant. But he was not going to be a part of *RoboCop 3*. What happened is that I learned he had written a script for it

that Orion had thrown away. I asked to read it and there was actually a lot of stuff in it that I really liked. It was Frank that came up with the whole notion of a conglomerate creating the homeless problem so that they could then profit from the crisis. He might disagree, but I found that to be extremely left wing and I also thought that it was a great way to introduce the new sequel.

"I also liked the Japanese element, which was kind of en vogue at the time with the Sean Connery movie *Rising Sun*. That was Frank too – and I think it came from all of the companies that the Japanese were snapping up. It was kind of chic to comment on that aggressive capitalism that allowed foreign interest to buy out national industries. I was interested in Frank's take on that – and he also loved the code of the samurai and a lot of these old Japanese movies. So I thought 'Man I love that too – we're on the same page here.' I was really enamoured by the Hong Kong films of the time which were being made by Tsui Hark and John Woo, such as the *Better Tomorrow* series, and I wanted to bring that whacked out, Asian feel to *RoboCop 3*. Maybe a little like Jackie Chan's Police Story movies too. I even wanted to hire the same Asian stunt teams that did these movies, but we didn't have the money or the intuitiveness to do that. I think the ideas I had were ahead of their time but the execution fell short."

YOU KNOW, FOR KIDS

Also causing controversy to fans of Verhoeven's *RoboCop* was Dekker's use of



// "I WANTED
// TO BRING
A WHACKED
OUT ASIAN
FEEL TO
ROBOCOP 3"

another child protagonist in the film, as there had been in *RoboCop 2*...

"I actually loved the fact that there was a little girl in *RoboCop 3*," chuckles the director. "She was actually Frank's creation – this expert computer hacker. I find it really touching when you have a pint-sized little punk kid with a giant, half mechanical man [laughs]. I don't know if it goes back to the Gollum or not, but I find that image quite powerful so I really embraced it. When I read Frank's script I said to Orion, 'I would rather re-write this than start all over again from scratch,' but, in retrospect, that was my first mistake..."

Certainly, the watered down, child-friendly *RoboCop 3* did little to please the purists (and Frank Miller was once again unsatisfied). The film's story focuses on a young homeless girl called Nikko who becomes attached to the tin lawman. In the midst of this robo-parenting, a gun-wielding, government-employed gang called The Urban Rehabilitators are throwing people off their own property in order to make way for a new citywide redevelopment project. Also causing carnage is a Japanese conglomerate that has invested in the OCP group – the privatised police force and employers of

// "LOOKING BACK IT WAS A BAD IDEA FROM THE START. YOU CANNOT WATER DOWN THAT VIOLENT, DRUGGED-OUT COMIC BOOK SENSIBILITY"

Officer Murphy and his perennially pretty sidekick Anne Lewis (the returning Nancy Allen). When all else fails, the Japanese opt to take control of the streets with some mechanical ninjas, leading to the classic line: "I thought your damn ninja was supposed to take care of RoboCop."

Laugh? You'll split your robo-ribs.

"The problem at the time was that there was this elephant in the room that needed to be addressed," adds Dekker. "Basically, Orion had experienced some success in licensing the RoboCop character to toy manufacturers and the animated series had taken off as well. There was no denying that kids had been enjoying *RoboCop* – especially on home video. It might not have been a movie that was made for children, but they loved it anyway. So Orion wanted to deliberately aim *RoboCop 3* towards a young audience. The one mandate that they gave me, and there were not many, was that they wanted it to be a PG13. Looking back it was a bad idea from the start because you cannot water down that violent, crazy, drugged-out comic book sensibility that Verhoeven's movie had. You cannot do it. That is not who the character is – and you damage RoboCop when you try and make him, and his world, accessible to children."

CASTING CRISES

Alongside the PG13 burden, Dekker was faced with a further challenge when Peter Weller announced that he would not be setting foot in the classic *RoboCop* costume for a third time (he opted to make David Cronenberg's similarly disastrous *Naked Lunch* instead). In his place would be Robert John Burke, doing his best to lucklessly match Weller's stature and instantly recognisable vocals. Still, in some sign of fan pleasing continuity, *RoboCop 3* still had Nancy Allen as Officer Lewis in the cast. At least until the film went and killed her off in the first 40 minutes. Oops...

"Uh... I have to be honest, that was my idea," replies the director. "I also have to be honest when I say that Nancy Allen was not happy about it. I felt that there had to be an obvious emotional point for the movie and when you look at it that is the moment where Murphy realises that the people he has been programmed to work for are the bad guys. So, yeah, not a popular decision, probably not a wise one, but that was my justification for killing her. As for Peter Weller not coming back: I actually didn't consider that a drawback. On a personal level Peter was very kind. He came in and met with me to talk about *RoboCop 3*. He was interested – he liked the character a lot – but he explained that he had this chance to work

with David Cronenberg which, as an artist, I totally respected. I even said to him, 'You have to do that, it is a no-brainer.' He was very nice about it. I thought that because RoboCop, just like Batman, is played 95% under the hood it was really just a matter of finding an actor who could, physically, match the role and also bring something of his own to it."

With its odd mix of ninjas, mechanical battles, child computer experts and RoboCop taking to the sky in a jet pack, the second sequel to the Verhoeven classic is not only bizarre but boring. The biggest problem with this flop follow-up is that it seems to be walking on eggshells – so scared to offend any sensibility in the search for that almighty wider audience, *RoboCop 3* limps along unassuming of anything but box office dollar. The end result, whilst occasionally quite stylish, is far from arresting...

"About twice a year I have recurring dreams about *RoboCop 3*, where I have the

ORION PICTURES

In the 1990s, Orion Pictures joined the likes of Cannon Films, New World and United Artists: namely prolific production studios that faded from the Hollywood map amid bankruptcy or an outright corporate buy out.

For Orion, though, it was especially depressing given the quality of films the company was still releasing up until its final breaths. Launching in 1979 with such hits as *The Life Of Brian*, *The Wanderers* and the Dudley Moore/Bo Derek sex comedy *10*, Orion would establish *Rambo*, *RoboCop* and *The Terminator* as its leading franchises.

Equally impressively, the company also oversaw the popular television show *Cagney And Lacey* and the sleeper smash *Bill And Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989). On a budget of just \$14 million, the first *Rambo* movie – 1981's *First Blood* – grossed almost ten times as much in cinemas. More "personal" projects came from the likes of Miloš Forman with *Amadeus* (1984) and Oliver Stone with *Platoon* (1986). Both movies were successful and, moreover, won lots of Academy Awards – a feat the company would repeat with 1990's *Dances With Wolves* and 1991's *The Silence Of The Lambs*.

So where did it all go wrong?

As with United Artists and their financing of the bloated would-be blockbuster *Heaven's Gate* (1980), Orion threw their muscle – and their money – behind a mega-expensive auteur project in the shape of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Cotton Club* (1984), which made back a tiny fraction of the \$100 million it needed to break even. One of the most infamous flops of all time, *The Cotton Club* haemorrhaged away cash from the company – and for every later hit, there was a pricey failure – including *Remo Williams* (1985 – losing over \$30 million), Miloš Forman's *Valmont* (1989 – losing over \$30 million) and the action fiasco *Navy SEALs* (1990 – failing to recoup its \$21 million budget or subsequent advertising costs). Moreover, Orion sold away its home video rights and, in the early days, looked to conglomerates such as Warner Bros for distribution – who subsequently kept a huge chunk of the cash take for themselves.

For a film to be a hit it needs to take in three times its initial costs – meaning that even *RoboCop 2*, which made \$45 million on a \$35 million budget – was a money loser for the studio. Subsequently, come the early 1990s red ink had replaced green ink at Orion HQ, resulting in the company having to do the only thing possible: call it a day. Ultimately, it was Orion's bankruptcy, as much as *RoboCop 3*, which has caused the robo-remake to take so long to gestate...



IMAGE: MOVIESTORE COLLECTION/REX

chance to do things all over again,” states Dekker. “And I think it would be a much better movie if I made it now – but hindsight is a great thing [laughs]. I just wish I had pushed myself harder – like guys such as James Cameron do – and not taken no for an answer. I should have probably pushed to keep it as an R-rated film, for instance.”

Held in limbo for two years, due to Orion’s financial woes, before making its debut in American cinemas in November 1993 (and finally obtaining a limited release in the UK in June 1994), *RoboCop 3* would bomb with audiences – taking in a tawdry \$10.5 million against its \$24 million budget. Largely referenced in the same breath as such other franchise-filleting films as *Batman And Robin*, or *Superman IV: The Quest For Peace*, Dekker’s sequel called time on Detroit’s finest law enforcer. There most certainly would not be a *RoboCop 4*...

“It was disappointing,” admits the filmmaker. “The most disappointing thing of

all was that for a while it was rumoured to be going direct-to-video, which scared the hell out of me. But in the post-production process Orion left me alone and didn’t even speak about *RoboCop 3*. They were concerned with *The Silence Of The Lambs* at the time, but unbeknownst to anyone even that couldn’t help them: they were going to go belly up whatever the case. So I never knew exactly what was going to happen to the movie. In the end Orion said ‘We should probably milk the most that we can out of this,’ and it eventually turned a small profit for them, mainly due to international grosses and VHS. But what stung the most was seeing stuff like *Terminator 2* and *Jurassic Park* come out. These movies set a new standard for effects in genre films – to the point that *RoboCop 3* was left in the dust. So when we were playing in theatres it was no competition. We were old news.”

As such, *RoboCop* would retreat onto television – with a 1994 small screen spin-

off that ran for just six months before being cancelled. Dekker, meanwhile, would go on to produce and write scripts for the *Star Trek: Enterprise* television series. After *RoboCop 3* his past triumphs with *Night Of The Creeps* and *The Monster Squad* were unfairly tossed aside. Unfortunately, to date he has not directed another full length feature film...

“Well that’s what happens – in Hollywood you are only as good as your last movie,” admits Dekker. “But, strangely enough, *RoboCop 3* was the most fun I had ever had making a film. Of course, the end result was a real mixed bag, but I think the casting and the acting are really strong and there are scenes I really like. It was my first big budgeted film and I felt comfortable making it, which might sound ironic because most people loathed it [laughs]. Today, though, I can look back at it now and see all of the mistakes that I made. It is what it is – but I am glad I had the chance to do it.” ●

Below: A perfect visual metaphor for the original franchise’s future...



SO WHAT EXACTLY *IS* WORNG* WITH ROBOCOP 3?

To use an old gag, it'd be easier to list what's right with it. Prepare for a long, "And another thing..." rant from **Dave Golder**



* THIS IS NOT A TYPO, THIS IS A WESTWORLD REFERENCE, OKAY?

Let's be clear: *RoboCop 3* was not quite a *Heaven's Gate*. It didn't single-handedly sink a film production company.

But it was another nail in Orion's coffin, an almighty turkey at a time when the failing company needed one of its bankable franchises to help balance the books.

And it was a true turkey. It's not a misunderstood work of genius. It's not a film ruined by studio interference. It's not even entertainingly bad. It's just plain bad in so many ways. Here are just a few reasons.

1 IT'S MADE FOR KIDS

Sure the first two *RoboCops* had been popular with kids watching them on VHS. And Orion wanted (needed?) as big an audience as possible for this third movie, so the choice not to make the third film R-rated had some logic to it (let's screw the kids for their pocket money too, this time). But did nobody at Orion understand child psychology at all? The first two films were popular with kids *because* they were R-rated. They were full of violence and naughty words. This made them cool. A *RoboCop* without the violence and naughty words? Not cool.

2 IT STARS A KID

Hollywood logic always seems to be, "if it's for the kids then it needs a kid". Okay, *RoboCop 2* had an annoying teenager, but here we get that most dratted sci-fi cliché of all: Nikko, the precocious preteen techno-wizard. By the time she has her bonding session with RoboCop – her head in his metal lap as he strokes her hair – you could happily watch him blow a circuit and accidentally decapitate her instead.

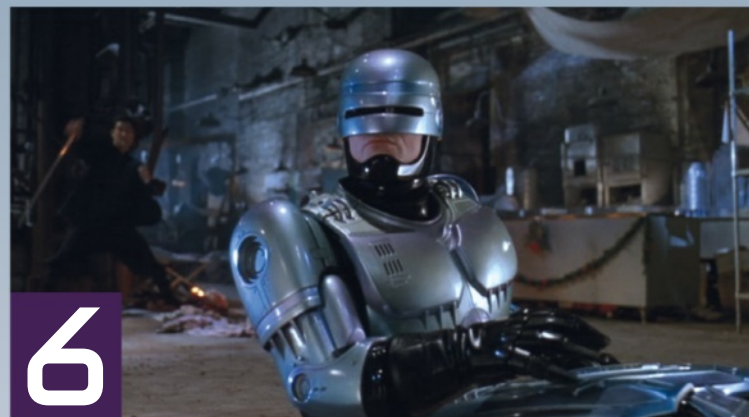
// "DID NOBODY UNDERSTAND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY AT ALL? THE FIRST TWO FILMS WERE POPULAR WITH KIDS BECAUSE THEY WERE R-RATED"



3 EVERYONE STARES WILDLY
The tone of the movie is just wrong. All the (non-robot) actors wave their arms and boggle their eyes so much, the film often feels like an *Airplane*-style parody of a *RoboCop* film, except that...

4 THE JOKES ARE CRAP
The original *RoboCop* was funny because it was a sharp satire, with blackly humorous moments. *RoboCop 2* was more of a straightforward action film. *RoboCop 3* tries to bring back the humour, but the comedy is about as black as Dale Winton's teeth. There's one – one – cartoon clip that's almost amusing in a *Ren & Stimpy* fashion, but aside from that it's mostly on the level of '60s *Batman*-style one-liners and sight gags. Particularly heinous are a shot of "No Smoking" sign just before >





// "ROBBED OF HIS R-RATING, ROBO SEEMS TO HAVE LOST HIS MOJO, AND SPENDS MOST OF THE FILM LYING ON HIS BACK LOOKING VAGUELY PUZZLED"

RoboCop sets the police station alight, and a punk with a Mohican trying to put a police helmet on. Which reminds us...

5 IT HAS DIM-WITTED, STUTTERING MOVIE PUNKS

A sure sign of bad sci-fi is a bunch of "movie" punks. You know the sort we mean. Real world punks can be intimidating (but are more often cuddly kittens at heart). Movie punks are invariably neon-haired buffoons with high octane speech patterns who walk like they've just pooped their pants, and who make Vyvyan from *The Young Ones* look credible. Here we have the Splatterpunks, who are slightly less intimidating than the Chuckle Brothers and deliver such immortal lines as, "Clock it, Jack, magazine basin," and, "Pop a tranq, hypo-head.

Splatterville is ours. Shoot him in the mouth, splatterbrain!"

6 ROBOCOP'S A DORK

Apologies for using such an old fashioned phrase, but no other word seems to capture so perfectly the bizarrely ineffectual RoboCop that we're given in this dodgy threequel. Robbed of his R-rating, Robo seems to have totally lost his mojo, and spends most of the film getting knocked down, and lying on his back looking vaguely puzzled. He has to be rescued by the technowiz at the climax and only defeats the android ninjas (we'll get to them in a moment) by sheer dumb luck. In the original film Robo was a cool, unstoppable force; here he's a bit of a wimp. He doesn't even appear for the first 20 minutes of the film, but that may be good thing because...



7 THAT'S AN IMPOSTOR!

...RoboCop is now played by a new actor, Robert John Burke, whose attempts at robotic movement look more like someone in a Godzilla costume (although in his first big moment in the movie – popping out through the roof of a police car – he moves more like a *Thunderbirds* puppet). He often stands like he's just about to do a Tommy Cooper impression ("Just like that!") or burst into a dance routine. He also has a very odd way of leaving a... pause before every... key word in a

sentence. It's not wonderfully random, like Shatner's delivery. It's more like he wrongly thinks the pause gives the following word more... gravitas.

8 ED-209 HAS A BUM DEAL

RoboCop gets off lightly compared to his old sparring partner, ED-209. This formerly terrifying metal menace is neutered here, reprogrammed within minutes by Nikko the whizz kid to act as "loyal as a puppy." Shame he didn't leave a little puddle on her head when he had the chance.

9 EVEN THE PROPS LOOK CRAP

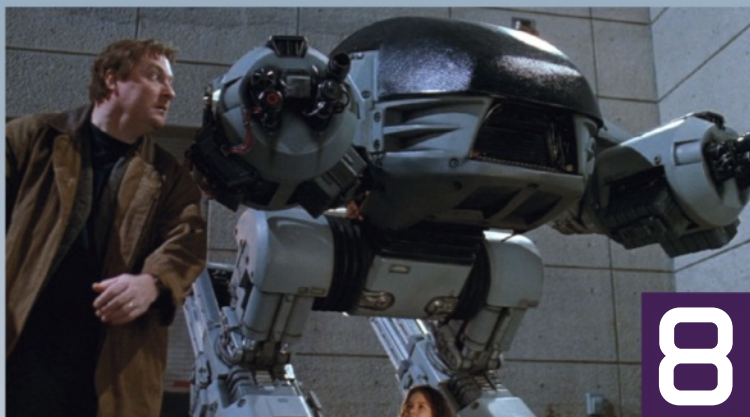
Why is that doctor trying to break that whatsit with a hammer that looks like it'd shatter on a banana? The whole thing just looks and feels cheap.

10 STRANGE SYMBOLISM

There are several odd moments throughout the film which you assume are meant to symbolise... something, you're just never quite sure what. Officer Lewis dies (boo!) in a church because, well, dying in a church is just so damn symbolic, right? And there's a scene change which cuts from a number of dead bodies to a number of domino tiles lying on a table top in exactly the same arrangement. Hey, people are going down like dominoes – how profound is that? (We're refuse to answer that question). But perhaps the strangest symbolism of all is...



WHAT IS WRONG WITH ROBOCOP 3?



8



11



9



12



10



13

11 THE WEIRD DREAM SEQUENCE
In which Murphy travels down a kind of *Tron*-meets-time-vortex tunnel as the faces of various ladies he's known throughout the trilogy morph into each other. Apart from the fact it looks as hokey as hell, the Freudian analysis must surely be, "I want to get laid, and I don't really care by whom."

awfulness nobody ever forgets it. Yes, Robo flies across the Detroit skies, performing eskimo rolls and rescuing the homeless from Splatterpunks. Whoever coined the phrase "jumping the shark" has clearly never seen *RoboCop 3*, otherwise we'd all be discussing the point at which *Heroes* or *The X-Files* "Grew Robowings".

12 IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE ROBOT NINJAS DON'T MAKE THEM RUBBISH ROBOT NINJAS

There's nothing wrong with robot ninjas as a concept. A bit cheesy, sure, but done well they could be a cracking addition to any film. They're not done well here. They're just here to tick off another box on the big list of sci-fi clichés in the movie.

14 ALL OF WHICH MAKES THE MOMENTS WHEN IT TRIES THAT MUCH MORE FUTILE

Because it does try. It really wants to be a proper *RoboCop* movie. It has Bixby Snyder going, "I'd buy that for a dollar!" It has fake ads and faux news items. It has a number of returning actors – Nancy Allen (Lewis), Felton Perry (now vice president of OCP), Robert DoQui (Sergeant Reed). The police talk about striking, then actually all quit from their OCP bosses. There's a plot about Japanese big business buying the city of Detroit. But these elements mostly serve to remind you how much better the previous films were, while *RoboCop 3* feels like it's playing *RoboCop* in the streets all on its own, being soundly mocked by the cool kids. ●

13 ROBOCOP MAKES SOME SERIOUSLY BAD TRANSPORT DECISIONS

At one point he procures a pimp's pink limousine for a car chase that's presumably supposed to be amusingly offbeat (it's not) while later on he straps himself into a jet pack for a scene of such sheer



14

// "ROBOCOP FLIES... WHOEVER COINED THE PHRASE 'JUMPING THE SHARK' HAS CLEARLY NEVER SEEN ROBOCOP 3"

ROBOTOONS

To date there have been two animated *RoboCop* series for kids' TV, and they could barely be more different in tone...

ROBOCOP: THE ANIMATED SERIES

YEAR IT PREMIERED 1988

NUMBER OF EPISODES 12

PRODUCED BY Marvel Productions

ROBOCOP VOICED BY Dan Hennessy

ANY OTHER CHARACTERS FROM THE FILM? Officer Lewis, Sergeant Reed, Officer Hedgecock (a really minor police officer in the films who appears here as a police officer who's jealous of all the praise and media attention RoboCop is getting); Clarence Boddicker gets over his big screen death remarkably well and puts in a cameo; the "old man" at the top of OCP appears to be the same character too. ED-260s replace the ED-209s, but mostly appear as comedy stooges.

SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN? Although bullets are replaced by lasers the show is surprisingly dark and mature for children's TV (more than the live-action TV series, arguably), tackling racism and terrorism.

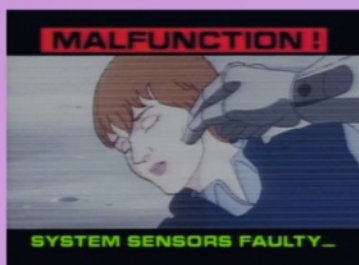
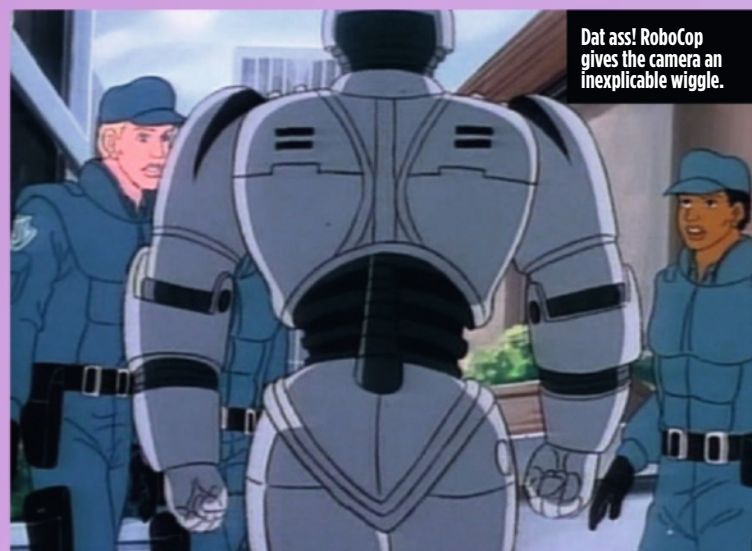
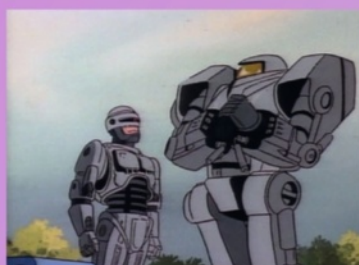
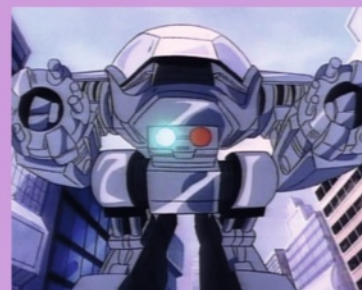
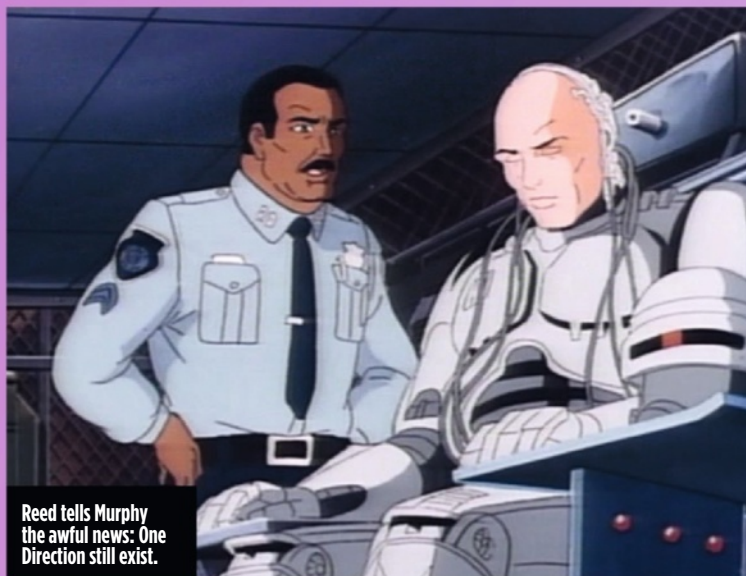
THEME TUNE Since Saban (the company behind the Western edits of Power Rangers) were amongst the producers on the show, it's no surprise that company founder and former Israeli pop star Haim Saban co-wrote the theme, which sounds like something from an '80s arcade game – electronic power chords ahoy (but little hint of an actual tune).

BASIC PREMISE Pretty much identical to the film, only with more lasers.

ROBOCOP UPGRADES He's certainly spritelier than he was. And he has lasers guns. The show also *loves* Robo-ass shots, and as he walks away from the camera, the animators have mystifyingly given him a Marilyn Monroe wiggle.

TONE As an attempt to recreate the film with all the gore and swearing taken out it's an admirable (if slightly pointless) exercise. The comedy ED-260s are fun, though, killing people for parking violations and causing comedy havoc while carrying girders.

WHERE CAN WE SEE IT? It's available on DVD from Jetix Films UK.



ROBOCOP: ALPHA COMMANDO

YEAR IT PREMIERED 1998

NUMBER OF EPISODES 40

PRODUCED BY Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Animation

ROBOCOP VOICED BY David Sobolov

ANY OTHER CHARACTERS FROM THE FILMS? Only Sergeant Reed (voiced by Blu Mankuma, who played Sergeant Parks in *RoboCop: The Series*). There is a character named Neumeier, though, who's the scientist who keeps RoboCop ticking. "I'm like a father to this guy," he says, which may be why he's named after Edward Neumeier, the original film's scriptwriter.

SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN? Hell, yeah. RoboCop is more likely to stick you to a wall with his glue gun attachment than punch your head off.

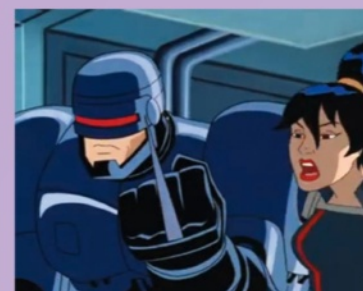
THEME TUNE A bunch of blokes singing the word "Roooooo... Booooo... COP!" with much gusto and gravitas over and over again at different speeds and pitch. You may feel the need to join in with the odd "Fus Ro DAH!"

BASIC PREMISE It's 2030, and after five years offline, RoboCop is reactivated to assist Alpha Division in its fight against DARC (Directorate for Anarchy, Revenge, and Chaos). RoboCop's partnered with a mouthy agent called Nancy Miner (presumably named after the *Robo* co-creator) and a plucky, have-a-go-science geek.

ROBOCOP UPGRADES Tons of 'em. Glue guns, replacement arms, roller-skates (oh dear). He's now more like Inspector Gadget than RoboCop.

TONE '60s *Batman* via *The Real Ghostbusters*, complete with RoboCop delivering some appalling puns and one-liners ("They're a little stuck," Robo "jokes" after using his glue gun on some perps). It's very gaudy, very silly and a travesty of a once great franchise... but if you can get past that, there's a strange, crazy kinda energy to it.

WHERE CAN WE SEE IT? No disc release as yet, but it's available on Hula. 📺



AFTER THIS BREAK...

Animated antics also featured in *RoboCop 3* and *RoboCop: The Series*. In the third film, we're introduced to Johnny Rehab, a cartoon hero and OCP propaganda puppet (not to mention a blatant plug for the Johnny Rehab toy line). The sequence, one of the best things in the movie, was directed by David Silverman a long-serving producer on *The Simpsons*. Think *Ren & Stimpy* meets *The Tick*.

Commander Cash in the TV series was the animated mascot for OCP in a series of commercials that popped up during a number of episodes. There was an even more insidious side to Cash, though, as it turns out he could literally hypnotise kids into buying OCP products.



IMAGES: MARVEL PRODUCTIONS / METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER ANIMATION



PRIME TIME TV

When *RoboCop 3* flopped in theatres, the future of law enforcement was forced onto the small screen. But was prime time kind to the lethal lawman? **Calum Waddell** spoke to star Richard Eden to find out... >



In 1994, the *RoboCop* franchise found itself in a flux that even the chairman of OCP would struggle to resolve. The phenomenon of Paul Verhoeven's original 1987 sci-fi shocker had been softened by two iffy sequels, while Orion – the studio that owned the rights to the character – had gone bust, delaying the release of *RoboCop 3* for almost two years. When the third instalment in the series failed to fire-up much fan enthusiasm, a decision was made to lease the *RoboCop* rights to a Canadian television production company called Skyvision Entertainment instead. As such, Officer Alex Murphy's alter ego was about to premiere on prime time – and with over \$1 million thrown at each instalment. The general feeling was that the trigger-happy tinman was going to be given a new lease of life and with no expense spared.

Alas, after only one season of 22 episodes, Detroit's favourite dystopian detective was considered too rusty for renewal. The show was cancelled amid poor ratings and reviews.

SO WHAT WENT WRONG?

"I think the problem is that the series went with a very different tone," admits Richard Edén, who was given the job of filling the Robo-suit on the small screen. "That was a disappointment to me as well, because I liked the dark, hysterical environment of the Verhoeven film and I also loved the

whole industrial look of that movie. But the television producers wanted to go in a new direction and a lot of that had to do with the time period. When we began filming the show it was in the winter of 1993 and America now had George Bush Senior as President. If you remember, his slogan was, 'a kinder, gentler nation' – and there was this desire, insofar as his policies went, to get away from violence or to at least to try and find a solution to it. Some people in the creative industries were taking this literally and trying to put that message onto television. Of course, that is a big mistake with *RoboCop* [laughs]. It is a little bit like asking someone in England to make a movie about Robin Hood – only he borrows from the rich instead of steals. Well that's not quite sexy enough is it? The idea with *RoboCop* was that they were going to find this more comic book approach to it, with superhuman villains for him to battle. Now I had very little input into that. Other than bringing some kind of depth, or simpatico, to the character I had no creative say in where they were going to take the series..."

As such, anyone expecting the street carnage and gruelling metallic mayhem of the original movie was sure to be disappointed by the TV variant. That said, *RoboCop* on the tube at least got off to an interesting start. The initial two-hour episode, "The Future of Law Enforcement", was adapted from the unused script for the first sequel, as penned by Edward Neumeier

Top left: RoboCop's back, but not quite the same...

Above: This guy won an Oscar in eye-rolling.

Top right: Don't worry crims, he won't shoot.

Top right: The villains were more comic book in tone.

Right: RoboCop: inventor of the cyber-selfie.

Right: The bad fashion was at least consistent.

Bottom right: "Want a hand with your shopping?"

Bottom right: Talk show host Umberto Ortega.

Below: OCP's mascot, Commander Cash.

Below left: Hang on, is this *RoboCop* or *Blakes*?

and Michael Miner. Not only does this add a curious twist to the proceedings (and also indicates a direct lineage with the Verhoeven film) but it sets the tone for what is to come. Unfortunately, during pre-production, whatever adult "themes" Neumeier and Miner had planned for their filmic follow-up were neutered. Thus, the result is an odd re-launch of the Robo-mythology in which Officer Murphy is forbidden from actually shooting any villains and is pitted against comic book-style megalomaniacs. In this case, it is a serial-slasher who is intent on harvesting human brains for the purpose of developing a new and elaborate OCP computer project that works with actual grey matter(!)

"I had no idea the original pilot was developed as *RoboCop 2*," reveals Edén. "I was never told that when we began the filming. The reason the scripts were so outlandish is because at the very beginning of the show, a business move was made. That move involved aiming the show at children. To be honest, I think that was probably the correct one. When I signed on to play the part, the plan was to have this run for four or five years, so we wanted to develop new characters and also give you

// "ANYONE EXPECTING THE CARNAGE OF THE MOVIE WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED"





some more insight into Murphy, the human being, and his past life. But we would never have been able to air the show, or spend the money that we did, if it was going to be like the Verhoeven movie [laughs]. And let me tell you something: we were filming over the winter and occasionally I would have to walk through a mall with the crew. Well, whenever that happened, Santa Claus had no chance. The kids would be visiting Santa and then they would see me and all I would hear is, 'Dad, dad, it's RoboCop – you need to take a picture of me with him!' Santa would suddenly not have any kids around him [laughs]. So, after experiencing that, you realised very quickly who the demographic was. That original *RoboCop* film, although it was very violent, was also quite tongue in cheek in its tone... and that is probably what the kids caught onto. So we amplified some of that comedy in our series too."

THE THIRD MAN

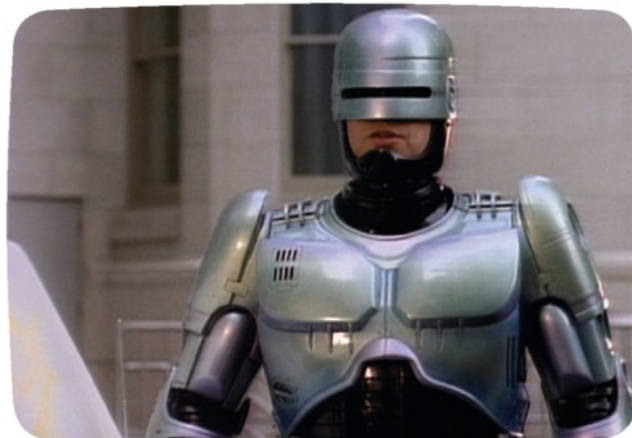
Also introduced in the pilot episode was the recurring villain William Ray "Pudface" Morgan – played by a scenery chewing James Kidnie (with a make-up job that made him look a little like Freddy Krueger). Although clearly inspired by one of the most gruesome incidents in the original *RoboCop* film (his face has been horribly disfigured by toxic waste), Pudface's ridiculous mannerisms meant that this cartoonish, but seemingly unkillable, crime

lord was far from a believable antagonist for our helmet-clad hero. Nevertheless, after the pilot episode, he would play a major part in four more *RoboCop* outings...

"When you are in that suit you are kind of dealing with whatever you are presented with," continues Eden. "In some cases, I liked the humour of those rival characters and I thought that James did a splendid job of playing Pudface – he had a lot of fun with that part. But I can see why some *RoboCop* fans were disappointed because the TV series was going for more of a comic book approach."

LIFE AFTER ROBOCOP

Richard Eden has remained busy ever since he wrapped the final episode of the *RoboCop* TV series. "I went back to independent stuff and also had the chance to produce and write," says the actor. "I work with my wife, the actress Shannon Hille on some projects, and we made the horror movie *The Intervention* in 2009 and then another film, *Retribution*, in 2012. The indie world is always where my heart has been." Nevertheless, there is no escaping the shadow of Eden's most famous alter ego. "I still get recognised as RoboCop," he laughs. "That role never leaves me."





Following in the footsteps of Peter Weller and Robert John Burke, Richard Eden was the third man to play RoboCop. Rumours persist, however, that both Weller and Burke had been approached before him, only to turn the job down. Eden says that he cannot confirm if this was ever the case or not...

"I think everyone was considered for the TV series so it would not surprise me," he laughs. "The idea of getting Burke onboard sounds most likely because the whole idea of the television series was that we were going to be following on from *RoboCop 3*. That was the plan anyway, which is why the first episode features Detroit's homeless people and there are a lot of child characters in the series too. But as for anyone else they might have had in mind for the part... I cannot say for sure. I don't know if they went to Robert and he said, 'I'm not going to do a series, in that suit, in the freezing cold Canadian winter – are you crazy? Give it to Richard Eden [laughs]'. That would seem plausible to me!"

Certainly, with a non-stop shooting schedule, amid a subzero Toronto winter, the *RoboCop* series was a hard slog. Making matters worse, Eden had the unenviable situation of having to mimic a character that had already been established by two previous thespians. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Eden – who at the time had won an Emmy for his recurring performance

// "WE WERE FOLLOWING ON FROM *ROBOCOP 3* - THAT WAS THE PLAN ANYWAY"

on the hit American soap opera *Santa Barbara* – did not immediately jump at the opportunity to step into the Robo-suit...

"I happened to be in Toronto at the time anyway because I was shooting some television guest spots," he admits. "I got a call from my agent and she said, 'They are thinking of bringing RoboCop to television, would you be interested in auditioning and have you seen the movies?' Now I had only seen the first *RoboCop* film and I vaguely remembered it. I recalled enjoying Peter Weller playing the role but not too much else. I hadn't done a superhero before and I was not sure that I wanted to [laughs]. Anyway, the next day was the last chance to audition so my agent asked if I would be interested and I said 'possibly' but I wanted to see the first film again. Luckily for me, I was staying at a friend's house in Toronto and he had a huge collection of videotapes. Right there on the shelves was *RoboCop*..."

The rest, as they say, is history...

"I remember liking it at the cinema, but I really fell in love with it the second time around," mentions Eden. "And, because of that, the idea of a series began to appeal to me even more. I was pouring myself a couple of glasses of wine and thinking,

'Yeah this could be really interesting.' So the next day I drove down for the audition and my approach was that maybe we could use the show to find out some more about the inner life of Murphy. As an actor, I imagined that the robotics of the character would be taken care of in movement classes, so that didn't concern me so much. What interested me was the challenge of conveying emotions through the suit. It doesn't matter if it is Iron Man or Batman: you need to express emotions through your suit and that is quite a difficult thing for an actor to do. Peter Weller had done a fantastic job of that and I hoped that we could show even more of the confused state of this beaten-up policeman. But, at least when the idea first came up, the concept of portraying a superhero was honestly the last thing on my mind [laughs]."

STRANGE DAYS

The *RoboCop* series also boasted the introduction of a new female co-star (played by Yvette Nipar), to replace the canonically "dead" Officer Lewis (shot in *RoboCop 3*), and very little crossover from its cinematic counterpart (OCP is viewed as a bumbling conglomerate rather than a corporation dedicated to making profit at the expense of Detroit's population). Nevertheless, some themes did manage to hold on. Critiques of capitalism, for instance, occasionally come to the forefront (see episode eight, "Provision

Top left: Pudface Morgan – Robo's recurring nemesis.

Top right: OCP was less evil and more stupid.

Bottom left: At least things still blew up in *RoboCop*.

Bottom right: Error 27: aiming the show at kids.





22", in which Detroit's welfare system has been privatised), junk television remains satirised (Geraldo Rivera is lampooned in "Sisters Of Crime") and Murphy's own family history is given a look in episode 11, "The Human Factor". For the most part, though, the *RoboCop* series is just incredibly bizarre. Episode 15, "The Tin Man", has gun-wielding madmen who masquerade as ice cream vendors, and episode 18, "Mothers Day", deals with Russian caviar smuggling (yes, really).

Consistent, at least, is Eden's performance. Although Peter Weller is no easy act to follow, the actor does a fine job in the role...

"I was taught the robotic movements of the character by this husband and wife duo from Cirque du Soleil," mentions the thespian. "I only had 30 days after being cast before I had to do the pilot so I was expected to learn quick [laughs]. Then we had 22 episodes to shoot so it was non-stop after that. I was enjoying myself, though, and I felt that we had some pretty good episodes – although most of them fade into one another for me. I liked the instalments that were a little bit more about the character of Murphy. 'The Human Factor' stands out as my favourite. It was very sensitive and I liked the idea of learning more about RoboCop's past life as a regular guy, you know?"

Unfortunately, though, *RoboCop* would not endure as a small screen icon. Failing to

catch on with an audience wide enough to justify the \$1 million per episode expense, this televised tribute to Verhoeven's classic would be the last *Robo*-project until 2001's four-part, small screen spin-off *Prime Directives* (see right)...

"It's a shame that we got cut because I thought we were picking up speed and energy," laments Eden. "We had really found our pace. Because these were huge productions and we employed a lot of people – sometimes three crews working 24 hours a day – I never really got a chance to breathe, mainly because when I wasn't acting I was doing press. So when we got cancelled it seemed to come out of nowhere. But if it wasn't going to work I'm glad it didn't work after the first season. If it was cancelled after the second or third season I think I would have been even more disappointed. As it stood, it all happened so fast it was just a case of thinking, 'Okay – onto the next project.'"

For *RoboCop* fans, though, the series looks likely to endure insofar as setting a precedent for bringing a big genre blockbuster to TV without losing, at the very least, the vast production costs and slick appearance of its theatrical brethren. Long before *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Hannibal* or *Bates Motel*, *RoboCop* showed that there was potential for a film franchise to exist outside of the cinema environment. As with most experiments, though, it was just difficult to get right the first time... ●

PRIME DIRECTIVES

Amazingly in 2001 a decision was made to give *RoboCop* another brief stint on television – this time in a four-part show entitled *RoboCop: Prime Directives* which was made for the SyFy Channel. Set a full decade after the events of the first Verhoeven film, this time *RoboCop* is (rather horribly) played by Page Fletcher, from the popular TV series *The Hitchhiker*. Unfortunately, Fletcher is not the only thing wrong with this one – namely, a plotline which seems to advocate gun ownership (a new law making firearms illegal for police has made Delta City more violent than ever) and a new robo-partner for Murphy. It's all a bit bumbling, if considerably grittier than the '90s TV series. Completists will doubtlessly want to track it down anyway.



Top left: The series lampooned TV news...

Top right: ...And also religious America.

Bottom left: Hard times for Edward Scissorhands.

Bottom right: Commander Cash is feeling animated.





Cover for the upcoming
Boom! one-shot
RoboCop: Beta.

ROBOCOMICS

From Marvel to BOOM!, Stephen Jewell tracks RoboCop's rich comic book history

With its obvious debt to Judge Dredd, the original *RoboCop* always felt like a comic book movie, despite being a purely screen creation. The input of Frank Miller on its sequels only furthered this feeling.

Consequently, it's no surprise that Officer Alex Murphy has also enjoyed a prolific comics career, encompassing five different publishers over the past 25 years and involving creators as diverse as Alan Grant, Simon Furman, Lee Sullivan, Steven Grant, Mark Bagley and Rob Williams.

FUTURE SHOCKS

After Bob Harras, Alan Kupperberg and Javier Saltares's 1987 adaptation of the original film for Marvel, an original monthly series was inevitable.

The comic launched in 1990. It was Alan Grant's track record penning 2000 AD's stoney-faced lawman, Joe Dredd, that made him the natural choice to script it. However, according to the Scot, it was actually his then-regular stint on *Detective Comics* over at the Distinguished Competition (DC) that brought him to the attention of the Marvel Editor-in-Chief, Tom DeFalco.

"Tom told me when he offered me the job that it was because he was enjoying the Batman stories I was writing at the time," recalls Grant, who does agree that there are numerous similarities between RoboCop and Judge Dredd. "I remember seeing a TV interview with the creators of *RoboCop*, in which they said that they looked at three or four other comic characters in search for inspiration, and Dredd was specifically mentioned as one of them. Nothing wrong with that. Ideas cross-fertilise all the time."

Paired with *Doctor Who* artist Lee Sullivan, Grant's 10-issue run emphasised the parallels between New Detroit and Mega City One. The somnambulist pleasure palace setting of #3's "Dreamerama" and the Detroit Dino Park's genetically-engineered, prehistoric inhabitants running amok in #7's "Robosaur" were pure Dredd. In contrast, Grant's farewell two-parter "Vigilante" in #9 and #10 pitted our hero against several superhero-types including The Detroit Vigilante, Doc Chainsaw and the improbable Beer Gut Man. "Sales were pretty good at first," Grant reflects. "We were selling a quarter of a million at the start but, of course, as is the way with comics, sales fell away with later issues."

After *RoboCop* #11's fill-in by Evan Skolnick and Herb Trimpe, Grant was replaced by Simon Furman, who had previously collaborated with Sullivan on Marvel UK's *Transformers* titles. "When it turned out that Alan was leaving the book, Lee put my name in the frame with editor Bobbie Chase," recalls Furman, who was resolved to take the book in a different direction. "I liked what Alan was doing, but the book very much felt like an extension of his Dredd work, which is not surprising as the first *RoboCop* movie seemed to be channelling some kind of inner Dredd."

RoboCop #12 was released in December 1990, several months after *RoboCop 2* hit cinemas. Furman's storyline referenced the events of that movie, but he was more interested in harking back to the original. "I never loved the second movie the way I loved the first, so I would say that more of what I was trying to achieve – and what I was channeling – was coming from that," he explains. "Though details, such as (OCP Executive) Donald Johnson's promotion in the second movie, had to remain true to what had already been established in the cinematic *RoboCop* universe. I also wanted to get back into the OCP corporate backstabbing vibe of the first movie. So the first arc that I did was very much what I felt was a more logical extension of the first movie. What do you do next if you have a RoboCop patent? You mass-produce!"



TAKING FLAK

Making his debut in #14, cybernetic mercenary Colonel Flak would end up giving Murphy a run for his money. "He was my first stab at giving the series its own kind of rogues' gallery," says Furman. "Villains that could return – in true Marvel style – again and again."

Along with scripting the comic book exploits of Hasbro's phenomenally popular alien robots for the past three decades, Furman also co-created Marvel UK's bombastic robotic mercenary Death's Head. "My career does seem to be replete with robots, cyborgs and everything in between," he laughs. "But I always take pains to humanise any kind of machine or part-machine character as much as possible, and RoboCop was no exception to that general rule. In fact, Murphy's humanity – and his struggle to hold onto it – was at the heart



TERMINATOR TOO

In September 1992, Dark Horse kicked off its series of *RoboCop* comics with a crossover created by two of the then biggest names in the industry: *RoboCop Versus Terminator* from Frank Miller (*The Dark Knight Returns*, 300) and Walt Simonson (*Thor*, *Alien*, *Star Wars*). It was destined to become one of the highlights of the chrome cop's comic career.

"The first step for me really was coming up with a way to make the two characters cross that *wouldn't* be forced," Miller told *Comic Scene* at the time. "To bring the two mythologies together without simply having a Terminator come back, chase Sarah Connor through Detroit and run into RoboCop. There had to be a connection between the two, and that connection would obviously be the premise of the two characters: artificial intelligence... Whatever was unique in [RoboCop's] mind would have been the spark that made it possible for the Terminators to become self-aware."

The result was a tale in which Terminators from the future travel back to RoboCop's time... to protect him! He's the target of future freedom fighters because his tech becomes instrumental in the creation of Skynet and the Terminators. Ultimately RoboCop downloads his consciousness into Skynet's systems, and waits for decades (until after the fall of humanity) for a moment to strike back.

It's bonkers. It's outrageous. It's action packed. And it looks gorgeous. "The biggest thing for me," said Simonson at the time, "was the design of the two major characters and ED-209, as well. With those, Frank [Miller], Art Adams and John Byrne loaned me the Japanese model kits, which were of immeasurable value in drawing them. Having a real object to look at was much more useful than having however many still photographs."

The visual appeal was further enhanced by Simonson's regular collaborator, letterer John Workman. It's not often a letterer makes an impact, but his lean, mean sound effects captioning (which occasionally near obscured panels to dramatic effect) added a whole new dimension to the four-part series.

Sadly, it's not currently available in a collected graphic novel form, but you can sometimes pick up old issues on Amazon and eBay for a hefty mark up.



Cyborg smackdown! RoboCop kicks some shiny metal ass.



Alex Murphy never seemed like much of a gambler to us.

of the first movie, and I wanted to continue and expand on that theme. And while Death's Head was always a darkly comic character, RoboCop was a tragic one and I always wanted to stay with that. He was always more human than machine to me."

Furman believes that he really started to hit his stride around #18 and #19's "Mind-Bomb" two-parter, which opened with a terrorist attack by the psychic criminal, Lot's Wife.

"You could begin to see the supporting cast of villains growing and more of the general direction I was headed in, as it had started to feel more like a proper ongoing story, rather than just episodic bites of RoboCop's world," says Furman, whose tenure was cruelly cut short four-months later after Marvel cancelled the series with #23. "It's just a shame that we never really got to run with it in the way we would have wanted. Things had to be tidied up and wrapped up quite quickly after that. But at

least we got to bring Flak back in #23, so that mission objective was fulfilled at least!"

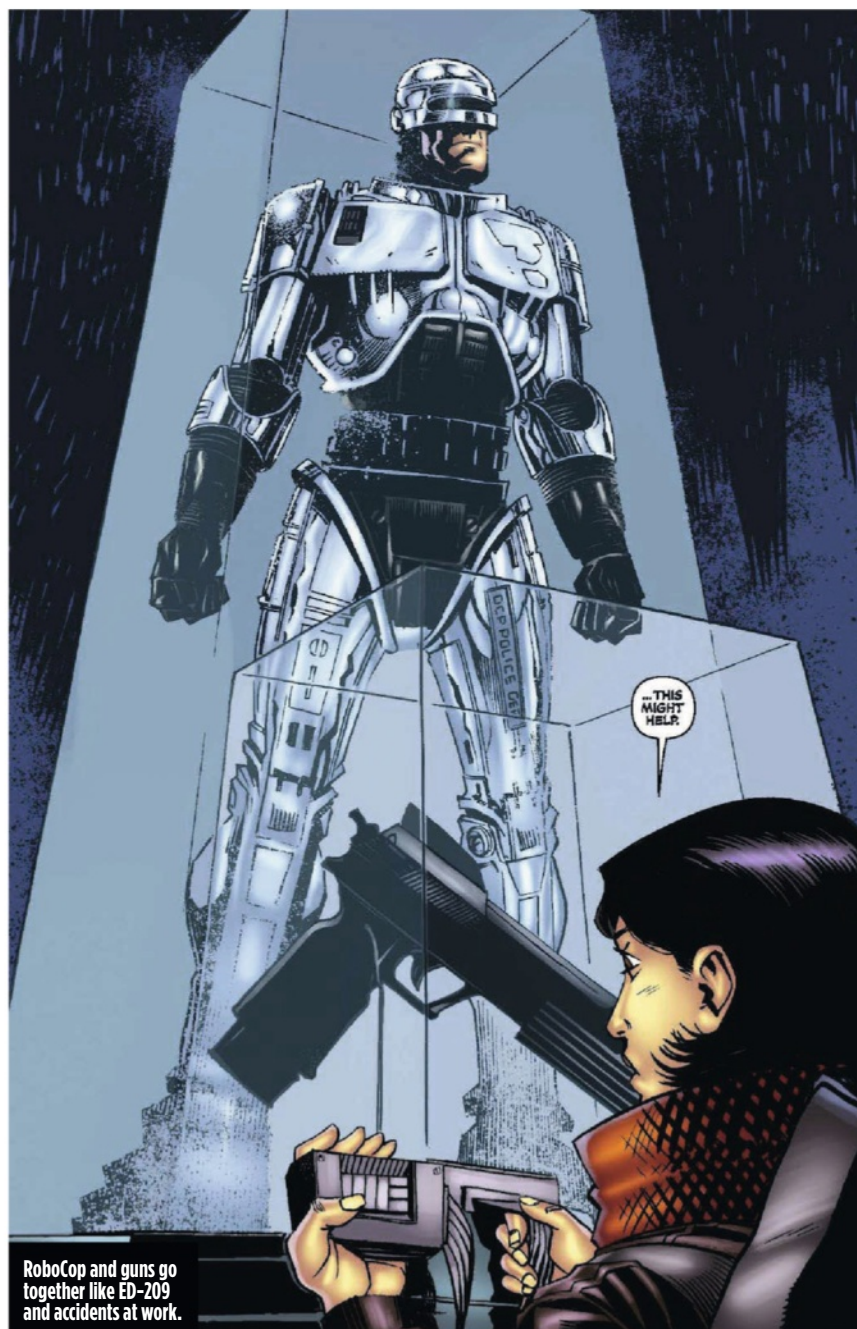
DARK HORSE DAYS

With licensed comics becoming an increasingly lucrative opportunity for independent comic companies, the *RoboCop* rights were next acquired by Dark Horse in 1992. They hired none other than Frank Miller and superstar *Thor* artist Walt Simonson to pit Alex Murphy against another popular sci-fi franchise in the four-issue blockbuster, *RoboCop Versus The Terminator*. And just as Marvel's run coincided with the release of *RoboCop 2*, the arrival of *RoboCop 3* in US cinemas in November 1993 was an important focal point for Dark Horse's *RoboCop* plans.

Dark Horse editor Anina Bennett turned to seasoned comics author Steven Grant, with whom she had previously worked on his creator-owned First Comics series *Whisper*, to pen the obligatory movie



Cover for the upcoming Boom! one-shot *RoboCop: To Live And Die In Detroit*.



RoboCop and guns go together like ED-209 and accidents at work.

adaptation, which was once again loosely based on a script by Frank Miller.

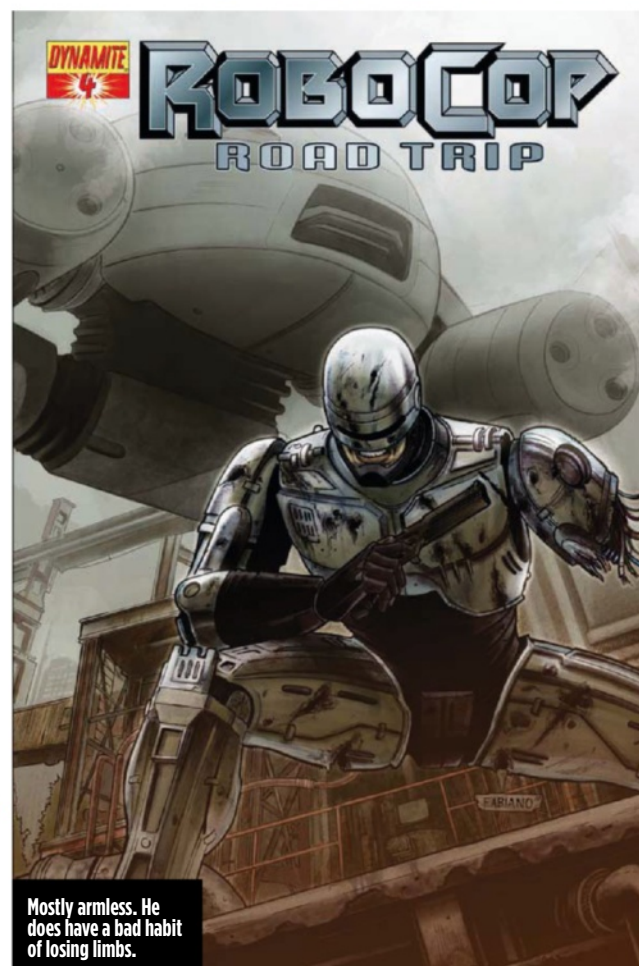
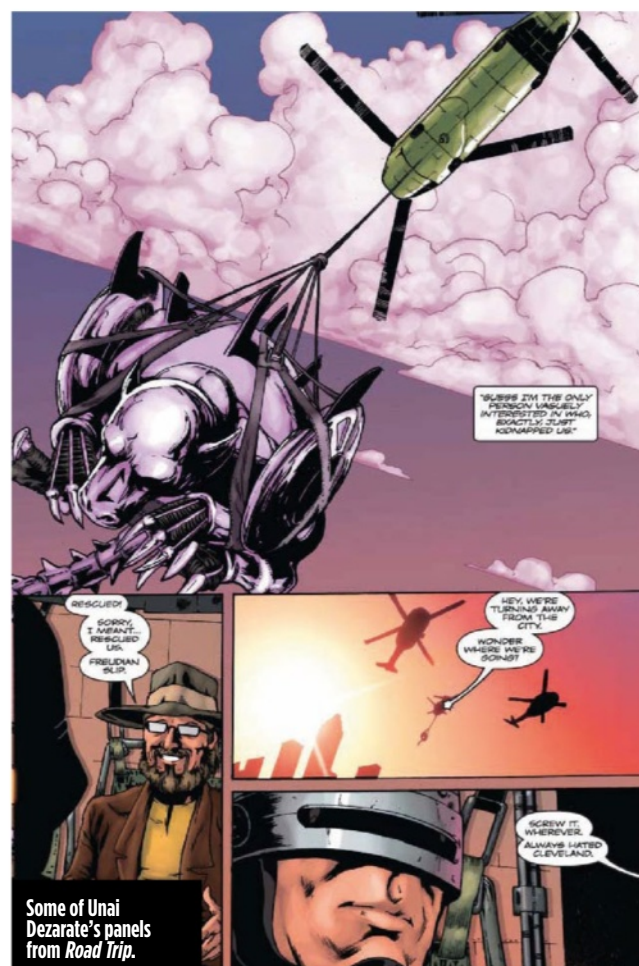
"The only thing that I've ever found difficult about adapting screenplays is fitting to space," admits Grant. "But *RoboCop 3* was pretty easy as I didn't really have any interaction with anyone, except Anina. They sent me the filming version of the script and I worked from that."

While *RoboCop 3* was set firmly in the Motor City, Grant despatched Murphy to snowy Colorado in 1993's original four-issues *RoboCop: Mortal Coils* story. "With that, I mainly wanted to get RoboCop out of Detroit, both to give a sense of a wider economic calamity, and to get Murphy out of his comfort zone. I thought that if Detroit had gotten that bad off, then the rest of the country must be in some dire straits too. Of course, now it's 2013 and America pretty much has *RoboCop's* Detroit, minus the high tech. Shows how much I know!"

REVISITING ROBOCOP 2

Little did the Las Vegas-based scribe know but that was just the start of a long relationship for him with *RoboCop*, and specifically Frank Miller's version. After John Arcudi and Mitch Byrd's four-issue *RoboCop: Roulette* in 1994, Dark Horse relinquished the rights, which lay dormant until 2003. They were then picked up by Avatar Press, who charged Grant with turning Frank Miller's original *RoboCop 2* draft (as opposed to the butchered shooting script) into a comic book series.

"It seemed like a rare opportunity to examine Frank's style in a way impossible to do just through viewing his work," reasons Grant, who was given a refreshingly free rein. "Most of the time in film adaptations you're allowed far fewer pages than the screenplay will fit into. Adaptations are an exercise in paring and positioning. But with *RoboCop 2*, [Avatar founder] William Christensen mainly wanted to make sure



that the whole screenplay was represented, so I got to take all the room I wanted. He literally said, 'Use as many issues as you need,' so it ended up being nine issues, which is three times the length of Dark Horse's *RoboCop 3* adaptation."

The adaptation was painstakingly illustrated with exquisite and explicit detail by Juan José Ryp, and Grant took full advantage of Avatar's reputation for graphic content. "It wasn't that I was 'able' to play up the exaggerated violence, I was *ordered* to play it up," he laughs. "I loved what Juan did with the material but I didn't have any input into it beyond the script. My job was really just transliterating the script to the comics page and the rest was Juan and

Frank. Every word in the book is Frank's, except for some sound effects which I added for clarity."

Although Miller contributed some strikingly stark covers to the series, Grant only briefly consulted his old Marvel colleague. "I talked generally with Frank about the project once, as I've known him for decades now," he says. "But we didn't really need to discuss anything about it as everything Frank had to say about the story was already in his script. After all, my job on *RoboCop 2* was not to be creative but to facilitate by giving Frank's creativity full play and to leave room for Juan's creativity."

While *RoboCop 2* was published over a protracted two and a half year period, Grant ➤

// "IT WASN'T THAT I WAS ABLE TO PLAY UP THE EXAGGERATED VIOLENCE, I WAS *ORDERED* TO"

THE NEW GENERATION

To mark the release of *RoboCop*, BOOM! Studios is publishing four one-shot stories that delve further into the new Alex Murphy's brutal backstory.

Written by Ed Brisson (*Secret Avengers*) and drawn by Emilio Laiso, *RoboCop: Beta* concentrates on the Detroit lawman's unfortunate predecessors. "Primarily, I wanted to focus on OmniCorp's early efforts to develop a *RoboCop*-like programme," says Brisson. "It's set in Iran, which the US is at war with in 2028. They've already successfully introduced the ED-209s and the more humanoid-like EM-208s to the American military and now it's time to try to find a new, more human angle to robotics. So we meet Joshua, who is basically the first candidate. He's a soldier, who was gunned down in an ambush and who happens to die at the right time to be brought into the programme. From there, we trace his time as RoboSoldier."

Teaming Joe Harris (*The Great Pacific, X-Files*) with Sex illustrator Piotr Kowalski, Murphy becomes a little too good at his job in the smartly-titled *RoboCop: To Live And Die In Detroit*. "I wanted to explore the idea that the law doesn't always work for everyone," says Harris. "Even in this supposed new, so-called golden age of renewal and cooperation between industry and public works like OmniCorp and the Detroit Police Department, there are going to be winners and losers. It's like Kafka's parable, 'Before The Law', in which a guy seeking justice is denied access to the law itself until the hour of his death."

In *RoboCop: Momento Mori*, Alex Murphy must battle the demons of his past before he can master his newfound armoured self. "We get to look inside his mind while his body is being transformed into RoboCop," reveals Frank Barbiere (*Five Ghosts*), who is teaming up with artist João Viera. "I wanted to create a unique and visually interesting story that worked with the idea of Alex's memories being compromised by the surgery. I think readers will be thrilled by the fun visual devices in our story as I've given João lots of interesting dreamscapes to play with."

Murphy's inner self also takes centre stage in *RoboCop: Hominem Ex Machina* after his armoured outer shell grinds to a halt. "The main thing I wanted to do was bring out Alex's humanity in a way that's hopefully somewhat unique," says writer Michael Moreci (*Hoax Hunters*), who is joined on art chores by Jason Copland. "That's always an important trope of robot sci-fi, the humanity of the machines, and vice versa. Alex's case is particularly interesting because beneath the machine, there's a human inside."



was also tasked with penning a couple of one-shots in the form of 2004's "Killing Machine" and 2005's "Wild Child". "The only thing I remember about either of them was that I wrote them very quickly to meet very tight deadlines," admits Grant. "But I don't recall the circumstances aside from William wanting to get more *RoboCop* material out post haste."

Along with Judge Dredd, Grant cites Howard Chaykin's dystopian *American Flagg* and Miller's own *Ronin* as pivotal comic book influences. "Watch the first movie with them in mind and you can clearly spot the elements that they inspired," he insists. "So *RoboCop* coming to comics brings everything full circle."

With the license passing to Dynamite Entertainment in 2010, Rob Williams was brought onboard to once again highlight RoboCop's parallels with the 2000 AD stalwart. "RoboCop just can't escape it," says Williams. "You only have to look at Paul Verhoeven's original and it's the satire that lifts it above cliché. The news reports are very acerbic and knowing. That's all pure Dredd. The original *RoboCop* is still probably the best Dredd movie ever made."

REWRITING HISTORY

Originally conceived as an ongoing monthly, Williams's run was instead broken down into two separate mini-series, *Revolution* and *Road Trip*. "I was happier with *Revolution*," he admits. "That felt very true to *RoboCop* and I loved doing the satirical news aspects."

In conjunction with artist PJ Holden, Williams also reunited Murphy with James Cameron's cyborgs in 2011's *Terminator/RoboCop: Kill Human*. "It had a bleaker outlook than the franchises usually go for," he says. "But it felt pure to its intent."

RoboCop last year made himself a new home at BOOM! Studios, who reached out to Steven Grant to convert Miller's original *RoboCop 3* screenplay into a comics series.

"That might be a unique achievement for comics, adapting two different screenplays for the same film at two different companies," reflects Grant, who returned to *RoboCop*'s third instalment 20 years after he'd tackled it for Dark Horse.

"It's something to mention in my epitaph! *RoboCop: The Last Stand* was going to be the companion piece for *RoboCop 2* at Avatar, but it ended up not going that way. It was a surprise to see it suddenly resurface at Boom!"

With visuals by Korkut Öztekin and Declan Shalvey, *The Last Stand* is set firmly in the gritty milieu of the *RoboCop* trilogy. "My job was to express Frank's vision of the character, so what the new guys do is their business," states Grant, who especially identifies with the 1987 *RoboCop*'s social commentary. "Frank was strongly influenced by Paul Verhoeven's original vision, and the social satire is maybe the part of that still resonates the most. Frank's scripts for the character had similar deadpan humour so I wouldn't say that either of us set out to mimic that aspect of the original film but it was a natural fit." ●



Some stunning art for upcoming Boom! one-shot *RoboCop: Hominem Ex Machina*.

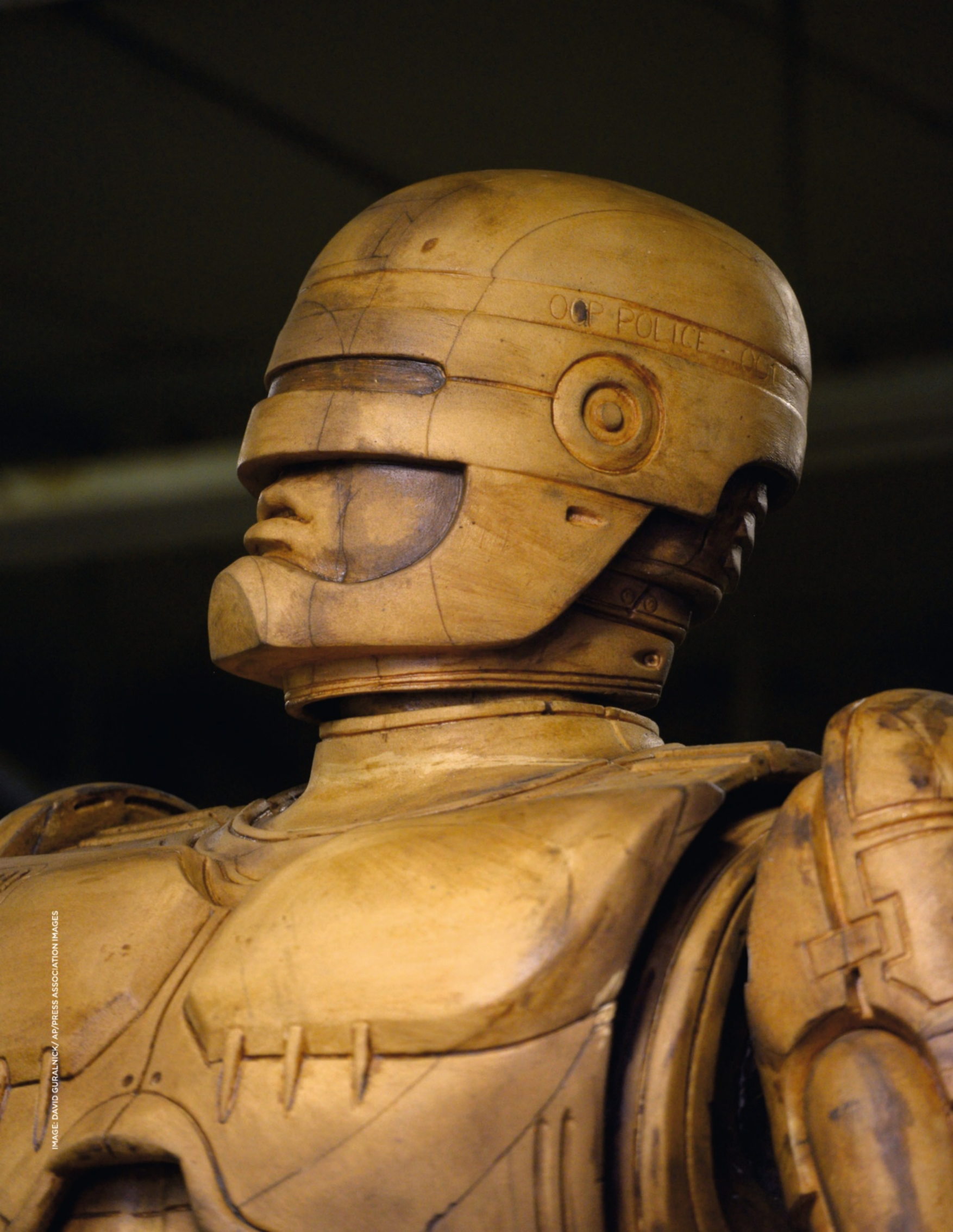


IMAGE: DAVID GURALNICK / AP/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

COPPER IN BRONZE

A scheme to erect a RoboCop statue in Detroit has raised all sorts of political and moral questions, discovers **Stephen Kelly**

Bronze, glimmering and standing over ten feet tall, RoboCop surveys the city of Detroit, as criminals and pigeons alike quake at his well-polished feet.

This was once a dream for Brandon Walley. But now, after a successful bid to raise money on the crowdfunding site Kickstarter, his vision is to become a reality. In fact by the time the campaign had ended, the statue had raised a total of \$67,436.

But how did he get to this point? It began, as so many things begin these days, with a simple tweet.

"Philadelphia has a statue of Rocky & RoboCop would kick Rocky's butt. He's a GREAT ambassador for Detroit," came a suggestion from a user going by the name of @MT to Detroit Mayor Dave Bing, back in February 2011.

Bing's reply was decidedly curt. He responded somewhat earnestly, saying, "There are not any plans to erect a statue to Robocop. Thank you for the suggestion."

But that wasn't enough for the internet, which, after witnessing the flippant exchange, thought: "Well, why the hell

// "ONE SIMPLE TWEET BECAME THE FOUNDATION OF A WHOLE COMMUNITY"

not?" In particular, it caught the eye of local artist John Leonard, who immediately took the idea and launched a Facebook campaign aptly named "Build A Statue Of RoboCop In Detroit." His friend Brandon Walley, a manager for a "clean-up Detroit" project called Imagination Station, then came onboard, suggesting that they use online crowdfunding service Kickstarter as a means to raise the money to make this dream a reality.

"The Facebook page was quickly approaching a thousand members within a day," Walley explains. "Our neurons immediately began firing about what this could be."

Walley was right to be excited. The team set a goal of \$50,000 on the Kickstarter page, promising to credit everyone who donated a dollar or more to the cause. Higher pledges secured t-shirts, visits to Detroit and booze. Fans rallied around the cause and dug deep. A simple tweet had quickly become the foundation of a whole online community. In just six days the Kickstarter had raised a massive \$67,436 from 2,718 backers. Now, it doesn't take a maths whizz to work out that some of those backers would have had to pledge a lot of money to make up the overall amount. And that's where RoboCop got some help from an unlikely ally: Omni Consumer Products...

Graphic designer Pete Hottelet's company was founded in 2006 and is

named after the dystopian conglomerate from *RoboCop*. They specialise in "de-fictionalisation", meaning that they sell products made famous in films and TV such as a *True Blood* drink, *Fight Club* soap and *Anchorman's* Sex Panther fragrance. Hottelet thought the project was a dream come true and pledged \$25,000. Despite initial suspicions that Hottelet's company might be too good to be true, Walley and Hottelet eventually joined forces.

"I had to do a bit of online research on Pete and Omni Consumer to make sure this wasn't some sort of joke," Walley admitted. "But sure enough, the real OCP merely makes fictitious items from movies a sellable reality."

With the funding complete, it was time for the next stage: building it. However, not everyone was as thrilled as Walley and co at the notion of a RoboCop statue.

OLD DETROIT HAS A CANCER

Erecting monuments to figures from popular culture is hardly a new idea. There's an impressive Martian ship from *The War Of The Worlds* in Surrey; Cary Grant in Bristol; Woody Allen in Oviedo, Spain, and Barack Obama himself has posed next to a huge *Superman* in Metropolis, Illinois. But in this case, the statue and the location are both very different.

For there's a reason Detroit was picked by screenwriter Ed Neumeier as the setting ➤



for *RoboCop*'s script. "As a kid growing up," he once said, "Detroit was all about the automobile factories. But by the '70s it had all fallen into ruin and the Japanese had taken over. That to me was a potent symbol of the decline of America."

Yes, the implosion of Motor City's once-bustling auto industry and the collapse of America's industrial-based economy has left the city economically destroyed. To give you some insight into what that means: one third of the city is vacant or derelict; it was reported in 2011 that 47% of its residents are functionally illiterate, while less than half over the age of 16 are working. The violent crime rate, astoundingly, is five times higher than the national average.

In the last decade alone 100,000 people have fled from Detroit, leaving behind a city so broke that last July (2013) it filed for bankruptcy. *RoboCop* mined the city's hardship for satire, but for these people it's a grim reality. You can kinda see why they might think that the whole idea is perhaps a little inappropriate.

The criticisms were varied. At the lower end of the spectrum were complaints that *RoboCop* wasn't even filmed in Detroit, it was filmed in Dallas, while one blog made the point "Sure, Philadelphia has a statue of Rocky, and Milwaukee has the Bronze Fonz. But honestly, is that what we are going for? Stupid tourist attractions that appeal to connoisseurs of lowest culture?"

There was also concern that *RoboCop* – set in a futuristic Detroit drowning in crime – evokes an image of violence that the city is trying to get away from. Worse, some see it as making a mockery of the Detroit police force which has had its numbers cut by 40% in the last decade.

"There has and will continue to be concerns about a RoboCop statue," Walley admits. "Detroit can be a complicated place and there is a lot of pride there. People are tired of being a punchline and want to move forward."

Above all of that, however, hangs the biggest criticism of them all: that while 60% of all children in the city of Detroit live in poverty, spending \$67,436 on something so trivial was a crass waste of money. And it's here where things get interesting.

"Detroit Needs A Statue Of RoboCop!" is, of course, privately funded. No public



Back in the helmet... kinda. Peter Weller supports the statue.

money that ever would have gone to schools, hospitals or police has been spent on this project. Yet it does beg the question: why, when faced with so many other issues that need urgent charitable attention, would people put their hands into their pockets for this project? It's something that even the guys behind the project are asking themselves.

Jerry Paffendorf, Walley's associate at Imagination Station, explained that the 10ft bronze statue has become so much more than just a homage to a good film, it was conduit for a debate on philanthropy.

"Yes, the success of RoboCop has truly put the crowdfunding model on the map here and offered some friendly inspiration," he says. "If people can raise more than \$50,000 for a statue of RoboCop, then we can raise even more to realise the projects that are important to us."

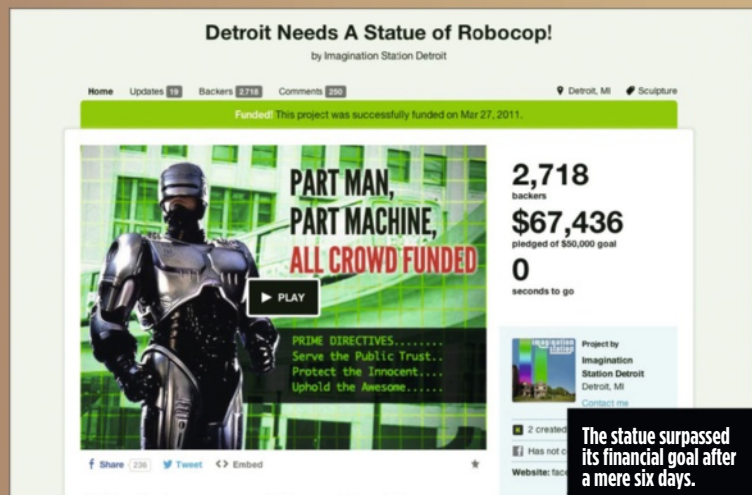
And so, in a case of life imitating art, RoboCop has raised issues and become a force for positive change. Amid the controversy, a new, separate "RoboCharity" was set up by Comic Book Resources columnist Ron Marz. It's aim was clear: use the publicity generated by the RoboCop

// "ROBOCOP HAS RAISED ISSUES AND BECOME A FORCE FOR CHANGE"

statue to get people to donate money to Forgotten Harvest – a Detroit organisation that rescues surplus or wasted (but still entirely edible) food and donates it to emergency providers.

"It just struck me as kind of ludicrous," says Marz. "So I suggested on Twitter that a chunk of money that size would be better spent doing some real good, like feeding people in a soup kitchen. Someone suggested that the sort of whimsy the statue represents has a place, and ultimately I agree, but maybe now is not the time, when there are hungry people."

It was a sentiment that not only those behind the statue agreed with, but also RoboCop himself. Peter Weller has since recorded two video messages to raise awareness of both the statue and the charity. One, recorded for Funny Or Die, is a tongue-in-cheek jab at Mayor Dave Bing and features Weller wearing a cardboard



RoboHelmet. The second, however, is a genuine heartfelt appeal.

“When I heard that folks on the internet raised \$50,000 to build a statue of RoboCop in Detroit, I was very touched,” he said. “But behind the action and adventure, the real story of *RoboCop* is a message about the return and renewal of life; and it all takes place in Detroit. A civic and public emblem of RoboCop might symbolise those same values for the Motor City, however when I heard that the statue had also inspired RoboCharity – on behalf of Forgotten Harvest, who feed the needy of Detroit – I decided to lend my support.”

With RoboCharity and Imagination Station organising fundraisers, the statue’s developments took on new meaning. It’s not just a novelty tourist attraction, but something with a lot of heart behind the metal. How very apt.

ROLE MODELS ARE IMPORTANT

As for the statue itself, the more practical elements have proven to be slightly more straightforward than the political connotations. The production company that worked on the original film now works alongside Omni Consumer Products, and has even donated the original 1:1 moulds of RoboCop for the new piece. With the help of modern innovations in 3D scanning, and restoration companies Venus Bronze Works, Warren Ally Foundry and Edgewise Forge, the bronze replica should remain completely loyal to its inspiration.

RoboCop will finally return to Detroit in 2014. Where exactly he will stand, however, remains a question mark, but current speculation suggests that he will stand tall over Wayne State University’s TechTown. But wherever he ends up, Walley and Paffendorf remain certain that once he finds a home, Detroit locals will once again be able to feel pride in theirs.

“There’s more to life than statues,” Paffendorf is keen to make clear. “But art has always been about turning ideas into avatars. Ideas are important, and these are all important ideas. With all of these elements combined I hope and believe that he’ll ultimately stand up, take his place, and truly be recognised as great art, in addition to being a tremendous phenomenon.”

The statue’s placement will mark the end of four years of constant work for Paffendorf, Walley, Leonard, Hottley and others. It is also well timed, coming as it does in the same year as the highly-anticipated *RoboCop* remake. Although the two events are completely unrelated, the current economical climate appears to mirror the events forecast in the shadows of the original film’s birth in the dark days of the Reagan era. Now, clambering up from the ravine of a new recession, the return of *RoboCop* is steadily looking like more than a coincidence. As Walley himself says, Detroit needs a hero, even if he is only stationary and cast in bronze.

“This city has been to the top and kicked down,” Paffendorf says “It needs to reinvent itself, it can no longer be the Motor City. Arts and technology will play a huge part of Detroit’s future and RoboCop is a great metaphor for positive change.”



27 years after his first appearance, RoboCop is returning to Detroit.

IMAGE: DAVID GURALNICK/ AP/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

ROBOCOP

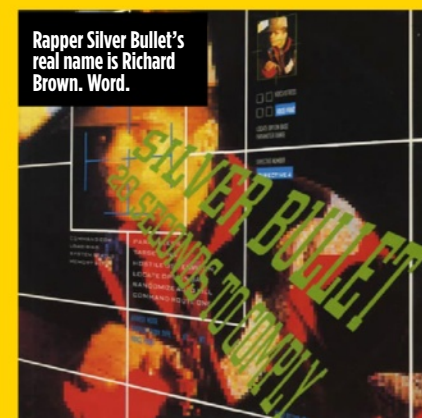
PRIME DERIVATIVES

From wrestling to fried chicken ads, *RoboCop* has invaded pop culture in a way few films can manage, discovers **Steven Ellis**





Chillaxing in the crib. Even RoboCop needs a day off to kick back.



Now that's one hall monitor you would pay attention to...

If you were to go on to Twitter and you happened to tweet something about the first *RoboCop* film, odds are that you'd get the response, "I'd buy that for a dollar." And that response would come from an account belonging to the fictitious comedian Bixby Snyder who features in the fake advert breaks from the film. Everyone should try it. Whoever runs the Twitter account will think it's Christmas.

Parodies. References. Quotes. Homages. In the information age these things fill our lives. Who knew that Admiral Ackbar's "It's a trap" would have the legs it does, or that Sean Bean's Boromir and his "One does not simply..." lessons could have so many variations. It would seem that pop culture can make a joke, or a parody, out of any line or any scene from any film.

But *RoboCop* is a true treasure trove of punchy dialogue and memorable moments that live well beyond the film's running time. It's ironic that a film which satirised the kind of media geared towards the short attention span of the MTV generation is still pirated and plundered today to feed the even shorter attention span of YouTube viewers.

METAL MACHINE MUSIC

Even as you were reading that last paragraph, one of the following no doubt brainwormed you: "Dead or alive, you're coming with me"; "You have 20 seconds to comply"; "Stay out of trouble"; "I bet you think you're pretty smart? Think you can outsmart a bullet?" *RoboCop* is just one of

// "ROBOCOP IS A TRUE TREASURE TROVE OF LINES AND MOMENTS THAT LIVE WELL BEYOND THE FILM'S RUNNING TIME"

those easily quotable films – even if you've never actually seen it.

Which is probably why *RoboCop* has attracted the attention of the music world as much as it has. One of the first big musical homages to the film was rapper Silver Bullet's "20 Seconds To Comply" from 1989, which managed to sample almost every classic line from the film. It was a reasonable hit and reached number 11 in the UK charts.

Silver Bullet wasn't alone. Thrash metal band Lich King used quotes and even named a song after the staircase-fearing enforcement droid ED-209. Short-lived acid house act ED-209 named themselves after him for another *RoboCop*-sampling track. Other bands have tackled the evil multinational company OCP in their songs and Canadian rock act Priestess wrote the song "Murphy's Law" in 2009 which was all about the film.

CARTOON CAPERS

As is fitting for a movie that everybody seems to remember fondly, *RoboCop* makes fairly regular appearances on pop culture mashing shows such as *Family Guy*, *Robot Chicken* and *The Simpsons*. In the *Family Guy* episode "Petarded", Murphy's death scene was recreated with Cleveland, Joe and Mort in place of Boddicker's gang. The show even went so far as to get Peter Weller in as a guest voice only to have him scream while his character is shot to death.

ED-209 hasn't escaped *Family Guy*-style parody either; in the episode "Running Mates" a droid called XL-K, who bore more than a passing resemblance to ED-209, is shown to be a very bad hall monitor as he goes haywire and shoots up the school corridor. *Family Guy* also once showed the cool cyborg cop relaxing in his dressing gown on his day off.



Arcade game *Smash TV* riffed on sleazy Bixby Snyder

In *The Simpsons*, career criminal Chester “Snake” Turley was once depicted as a RoboCop type cyborg during season 23’s episode “Holidays Of Futures Passed” and Bart once dreamed that Santa’s Little Helper became a canine version of our hero. In the episode “Kill The Alligator And Run”, Homer watches a TV show featuring a character called The Cyborganizer – a familiar-looking robot tasked with organising the NYPD’s paperwork. In another *Simpsons* episode, “Future-Drama” from 2005, the show depicts a future 2013 as a place where Chief Wiggum and all the cops in Springfield are now RoboCop-type cyborgs. The show also parodies *ED-209* as a wrestling robot named Killhammed Aieeee who was seen to be very successful in *Robot Rumble* – an in-show parody of *Robot Wars*.

RoboCop has also appeared in *Robot Chicken* in the sketch RoboCop Pillow Talk which features an X-rated take on one of his most well-known catchphrases. In an appearance in *Beavis And Butthead*, RoboCop saves Christmas from criminals and in an episode of *South Park* Kenny goes to a Halloween costume party as ED-209.

One of the most loving homages to *RoboCop* comes from the minds of sci-fi fan favourites Simon Pegg, Edgar Wright and Jessica Hynes (née Stevenson) in their generation-defining *Spaced*. The second season episode “Mettle” features an opening sequence which copies quite faithfully the first views from RoboCop’s perspective, as the gang build their axe-wielding robot Private Iron for a *Fight Club*-inspired robot fighting competition. We miss that show.

ODD APPEARANCES

When we step away from the more obvious and popular programmes, RoboCop has a habit of turning up in the oddest of places. Some of the more bizarre appearances of the cyborg cop, or at least his likeness, include



RoboCop’s 5th directive: give good lovin’ to all civilians.

being featured in several very odd Japanese television adverts, where he’s variously selling roach spray, ramen noodles and fried chicken. The latter in particular has to be seen to be believed – go look them up on YouTube now.

Another strange appearance with a *RoboCop* flavour occurred during a Kylie Minogue stage performance at the 2008 BRIT awards. The Australian pop princess was accompanied by a troop of dancers in multi-coloured metallic suits and some very obvious RoboCop-style helmets while she sang her hit song “Wow”.

The whole *RoboCop* bandwagon, though, was never fishier than in 1991, when the sequel to popular Amiga game *James Pond* gave its saucy piscine superspy star a robot suit, an extendable midriff and rechristened him RoboCod. We bet the villains liked giving him a good battering...

// "ROBOCOP HAS THE HABIT OF TURNING UP IN THE ODDEST OF PLACES, LIKE JAPANESE TV ADVERTS"

WIDER INFLUENCES

Besides the parodies, the quotes, the homages and the bizarre promotional appearances *RoboCop* has had an impact on the English language itself. The name RoboCop has come to be used as an idiom for a strong character. Be they a police officer or not, it can be used as a name for anyone who is seen to be tough or strong or stoic, in real life or in fiction.

Similarly ED-209 has come to be a character often seen as the archetype of a big dumb robot prone to malfunctioning.



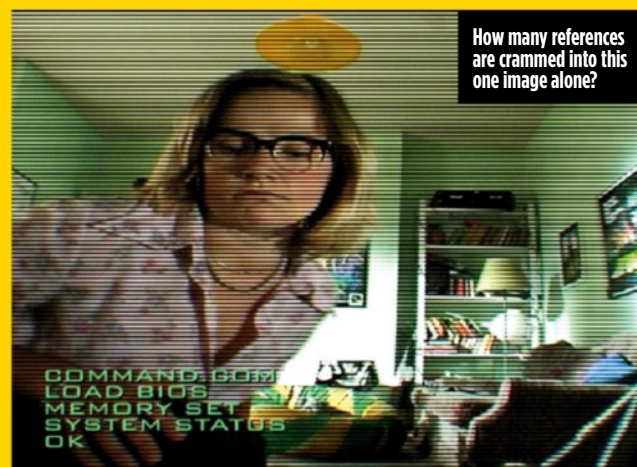
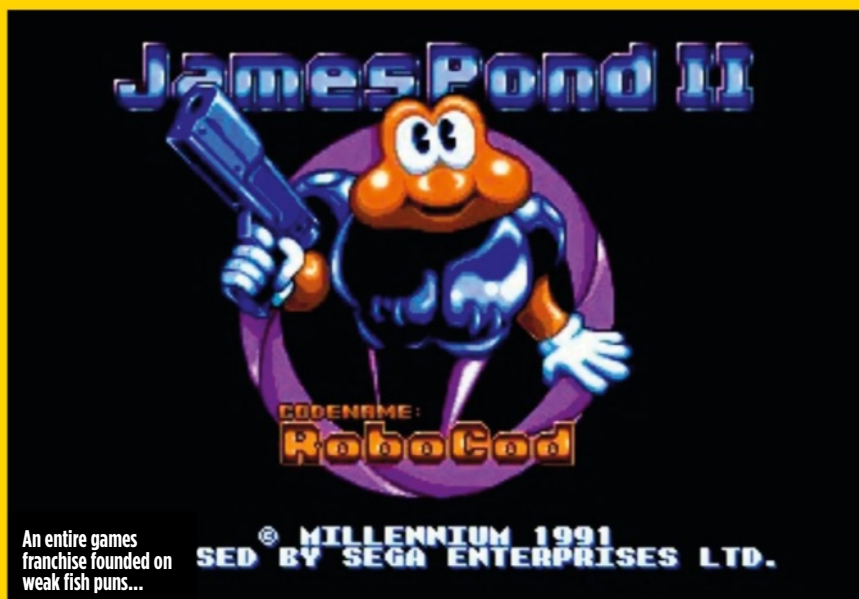
RoboCrook: Chester “The Snake” Turley in *The Simpsons*.



Always remember to take your DVDs back to Blockbuster, kids.



That’s the face of a man who really wants some fried chicken.



And of course Bixby Snyder's, "I'd buy that for a dollar", has also entered the public consciousness as a term meaning something pretty good. It has its own entry in the Urban Dictionary, and was lifted wholesale in the early '90s by the classic video game *Smash TV*, where it would sometimes be uttered before a new round started.

REMEMBERING ROBO

You could say that RoboCop has come full circle. Even with the remake due out soon the original is still regularly referenced and remembered. When Pegg, Frost and Wright's final "Cornetto trilogy" film *The World's End* needed songs to remind us of the '90s they picked Silver Bullet's "20 Seconds To Comply" for the film's soundtrack. Murphy even got a nod from one of his own forebears. 2000 AD character Judge Dredd was a major influence on the original *RoboCop*. When Dredd returned to the big screen in 2012 (played by Karl Urban), the future lawman quoted ED-209's famous "20 seconds" line.

Sure, there are many other memorable films out there and a huge number of quotable lines rattling around in our heads and on the internet. But there's something a bit special about *RoboCop*. It wasn't the biggest box office hit of all time, but for some reason it has managed to punch far above its weight, it has managed to have far more memorable aspects than most films, and it has certainly earned its place in the hearts and minds of fans the world over.



ROBOCOP WRESTLES

Perhaps the most bizarre example of *RoboCop*'s transition from screen to pop culture was when, on May 19, 1990, the character was booked to appear on a WCW pay-per-view match in Washington DC. The three-hour event, entitled *Capital Combat: The Return of RoboCop*, was hyped around the release of *RoboCop 2*, which was slated to blast its way into American theatres one month later. In one of history's most inane attempts to promote a motion picture, RoboCop was written into a grappling storyline in which he would partner with WCW's main event star Sting (not the singer) to take on a group of bad guys called The Four Horsemen. In his promo, RoboCop strangely indicated that he was going to shoot the opposing wrestlers dead. Clearly, even in a scripted-sport, the referee would have to draw a line there. In reality, the character s-l-o-w-l-y walked to the ring, amidst some audible boos from the audience (the announcers, trying their best, insisted he was obtaining "an amazing ovation"), broke through a "steel" door (that fell apart the moment he touched it - more boos) and sent the bad guys packing. "They didn't want any part of RoboCop," insisted the commentators. Quite. While the footage is on YouTube, the quality is too poor to screengrab. We did, however, find this fun video of *Fire Pro Wrestling*, which let's you fight using your Xbox avatar - in this case RoboCop. bit.ly/1cWO9HM



RENT-A-ROBOT

RoboCop rip-off or inspired low budget cult fave? **Calum Waddell** looks at direct-to-video '90s rental romp *Cyborg Cop*...

After *RoboCop* became a sleeper smash in 1987, a number of similar-sounding titles began to find their way onto the shelves of VHS shops everywhere. So it was, then, that *RoboCop* fans found themselves looking to the likes of *Maniac Cop* (1988), *Samurai Cop* (1989) and *Robot Jox* (1990) for some mindless, but memorable, post-Verhoeven violence.

However, perhaps most intriguing of all, was a film that advertised itself as a direct port of both *The Terminator* (1984) and the Delta City shenanigans of *RoboCop* – namely, 1993's *Cyborg Cop*.

Yet, looking back, what is most interesting about this particular pot-boiler is that – despite a slipcover highlighting a metallic marauder and the multipart question “Human? Cyborg? Or Killer Robot?” – this eccentric oddity never quite delivered on the

Opposite: Part man, part machine – all low budget.

Below: Yeah... You might want to go and see a doctor about that, mate.

promise to be a blatant B-movie version of an A-list favourite...

THEY CAN REBUILD HIM

Set in the near future, *Cyborg Cop* involves a “dangerous” mission to Saint Lucia (in reality, a fairly non-threatening Caribbean island which was once a British colony) where evil John Rhys-Davis is rumoured to be profiting from harvesting half-human robots as military weapons. Sent in to take down the scurrilous swine is a heavy duty army unit, led by a personality-less badass type called Phillip (Todd Jensen). Unfortunately Phillip comes a cropper in a battle against one of Davis's Terminator-type tormentors – having his right hand swiped off amid a torrent of spurting blood. Soon thereafter Phillip is reconstructed as a robot – and his policeman brother (played by straight-to-video superstar David Bradley) is on the trail of justice, alongside a beautiful blonde newspaper reporter (the fetching Alonna Shaw).

Helmed by old hand Sam Firstenberg, whose CV includes such pulp classics as *American Ninja* (1985) and *Avenging Force* (1986), the action comes thick and fast and the feature is certainly slickly produced. Choice *Cyborg Cop* moments include a sequence where the titular antagonist punches a hole clean through some schmuck's skull and a fiery finale involving star Bradley beheading the bad guy by riding a motorcycle off a ramp and onto his neck. Moreover, all the essential low budget genre tropes are touched upon with plenty of biceps, blood, boobs and bullet ballets.

ON NINJAS AND CYBORGS

“For a long time, the big studios were scared of producing crazy and violent action movies,” laughs Firstenberg when *SFX* catches up with him. “But I loved them and when I got into the business I was happy to make them. I did a lot of ninja movies during the 1980s, and then *Cyborg Cop* in the early '90s. All of them were a lot of fun to do. I was around when *Rambo*, *Terminator* and *RoboCop* were making lots of money. These were higher budgeted than what I was making, and we were imitating these films on a smaller scale, but we have still stood the test of time. People are still watching *American Ninja* and *Cyborg Cop* – so we must have done something right [laughs]. Some of that may have had to do with our stars. You know, a lot of these action guys could really fight. David Bradley, from *Cyborg Cop*, he



IMAGES: NU IMAGE / THE KOBAL COLLECTION

CYBORG COP





was a proper martial artist and he looked the part."

LOVE AND BULLETS

Cyborg Cop rears its *RoboCop* influence through the depiction of a cold corporate baron (John Rhys-Davies, with an odd Northern English accent – channelling Ronny Cox's role in the Verhoeven movie) and in its finale in which Bradley faces a helmet-clad humanoid. However, for the most part, *Cyborg Cop* is more indebted to such '80s actioners as the Schwarzenegger opus *Commando* (1985) and Firstenberg's own *American Ninja* movies – with an opening SWAT team battle utilising more barrels of TNT than the entire *RoboCop* trilogy combined. That said, just as Murphy had a female companion at his side, so *Cyborg Cop* gives star David Bradley a blonde compatriot to enter into battle with (unlike Detroit's finest crime-fighter, though, Bradley gets ample chance to leap "undercover" with his co-star).

"These films were made for teenage boys," continues Firstenberg. "Or perhaps

grown men who still thought they were teenage boys [laughs]. But if you look at these big macho movies, sometimes they were also about finding love. *American Ninja* was definitely about that. Other times they were buddy-buddy movies. There was a formula there and that was what the audience wanted."

Unsurprisingly, *Cyborg Cop* notched up enough popularity to warrant a further Firstenberg-directed sequel. With star Bradley also back in action, *Cyborg Cop II* arrived in 1994. Veering even more into *Terminator* territory, this one has an evil-android battling our hero and a scene taken directly from *T2* in which Bradley picks up a young boy and throws him onto the back of his motorcycle. Nevertheless, some *RoboCop* influence surfaces in the actual look of the "cyborg cop" – this time clad in a rubber costume that most definitely echoes the appearance of Murphy's alter-ego.

The end result is painless and brainless – enlivened by some amusing set pieces such as the random revelation that our robotic ruffian can fire flames from his arm!

// "CYBORG COP NOTCHED UP ENOUGH POPULARITY TO WARRANT A FURTHER SEQUEL WITH BRADLEY ALSO BACK IN ACTION"

Left: If you visited a video store in the '90s, chances are you'd have found this...

"I am very surprised that movies I did so many years ago are still remembered," says Firstenberg. "They were watched by the young men of the time and now by the kids of today. I hear now from 12 and 13 year old boys who love these films. Who could ever have known? Often, it is these small genre movies that are the most remembered."

Case in point: in 1995 a stinker called *Terminal Impact* slipped out on videocassette. Only now it had a new title (wait for it)... *Cyborg Cop III*. Such is the strange legacy of a low budget franchise, devised to cash-in (at least in its title) on *RoboCop*, only to find its own lease of life as a grungy and gregariously enjoyable cash-strapped schlocker in its own right. Altogether now: I'd buy that for a dollar...

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO DAVID BRADLEY?

Just as Verhoeven had his Peter Weller, so too did *Cyborg Cop* have its main man: ex-karate champion David Bradley. Having succeeded in the world of martial arts, Bradley seemed poised to take VHS machines by storm when he replaced leading man Michael Dudikoff in the *American Ninja* franchise (believe us, this was a big deal for kids of the video age). So it was then that he reached (sort of) international attention with *American Ninja 3* in 1989. Alas, the '80s were coming to an end, and big hunks of muscle coldly breaking necks were being superseded by a more considerate "action" hero (such as Mel Gibson in the *Lethal Weapon* movies). Consequently, following the inevitable *American Ninja 4* (1990) and *5* (1993), Bradley found his feet with the *Cyborg Cop* movies. Yet, that big break into Hollywood stardom never quite happened and, after 1997's drama about a shoe salesman, *Crisis* (nope, us neither), our man reverted back to obscurity, reportedly retiring to his hometown of Arlington, Texas. If you're out there Dave, do get in touch.



"No, I'm not the one from Harry Potter!"

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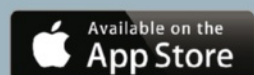
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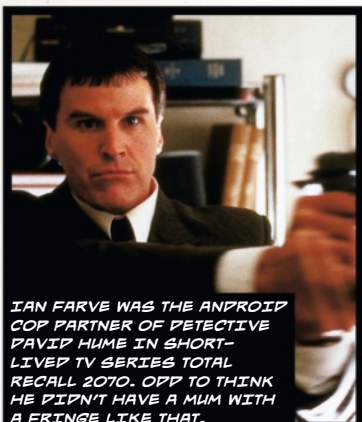
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TOP OF THE COPS

11 MORE CYBORG AND ROBOT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS (NOT INCLUDING CYBORG COP BECAUSE HE'S NOT TOP OF ANYTHING)



IAN FARVE WAS THE ANDROID COP PARTNER OF DETECTIVE DAVID HUME IN SHORT-LIVED TV SERIES TOTAL RECALL 2070. ODD TO THINK HE DIDN'T HAVE A MUM WITH A FRINGE LIKE THAT.



MAC AND CHEESE WAS ONE OF THE MANY FICTITIOUS SHOWS THAT JOBBING ACTOR JOEY FROM FRIENDS STARRED IN.



THESE MECHANICAL STORMTROOPER WANNABES ARE THE ROBOT COPS FROM THE 2012 TOTAL RECALL REMAKE.



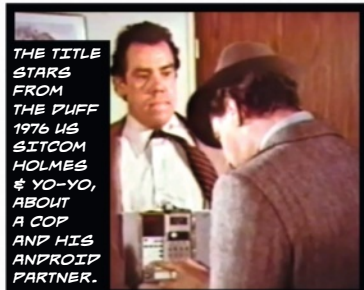
THE THIRD WORLD ROBOT COP FROM NEILL (DISTRICT 9) BLOMKAMP'S 2004 SHORT TETRA VAAL (WHICH IS THE INSPIRATION FOR HIS NEXT FILM, CHAPPY).



INSPECTOR GADGET WAS A DIM-WITTED CYBORG SLEUTH WHO USES HIS POWERS TO FIGHT CRIME. BADLY.



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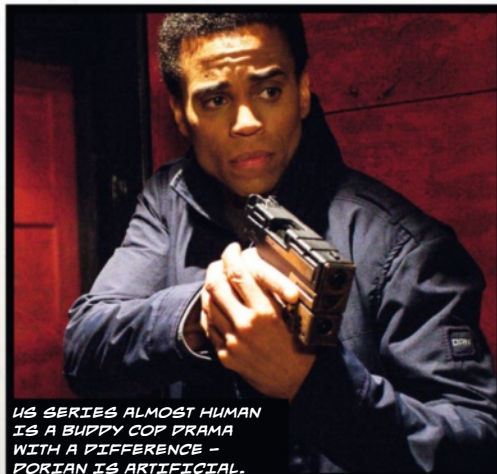
THE TITLE STARS FROM THE PUFF 1976 US SITCOM HOLMES & YO-YO, ABOUT A COP AND HIS ANDROID PARTNER.



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